

147 TIPS FROM THE PROS

Salt Water

SPORTSMAN

TUNA
STRATEGIES
COAST TO COAST

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ISSUE

CAPTAINS' CHOICE
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HOT SPOTS

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Plus
TEST
DRIVE

SEAVEE 370Z

BOSTON WHALER
420 OUTRAGE



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FLORIDA SILVER RUSH

TOP TARPON GUIDES SOLVE THE
SPRING MIGRATION RIDDLE

BY ALEX SUESCUN



ON THE COVER

Yellowfin tuna are highly coveted, but it takes fine-tuned techniques to catch them consistently.

PHOTO BY: Adrian Gray



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NEW GEAR

Sperry Kingfisher kicks;
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TOP STRIPER LURES



*Striped bass pros reveal
their favorite lures to help you
score more this summer.*



BOAT TESTS: SEAVEE 370Z / BOSTON WHALER 420 OUTRAGE

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PRO IS AS PRO DOES



GLENN LAW

T

This column generally takes up its own causes, tells its

own stories, tries to provide some insight into something that's not found elsewhere between the covers. As a rule, we don't just reiterate what's in the pages ahead in order to fill space. But putting this, our annual Pro Issue, together this month was particularly enjoyable. So we have to tout this issue as being especially engaging — it was for us — and assembling this

collection of expert advice and detailed information prompted some questions.

Such as: What's a Pro Issue? Is it an issue for pros? Well, maybe, but not necessarily. We hope even the experts can learn a thing or two from this month's stories.

Our take on it is that it's a collection of stories, not so much about the pros themselves, but an opportunity for them to showcase and share what they know and what they've learned, and the way they approach their days on the water that makes them

worth listening to.

What's a pro, anyway? Obviously someone who does what they do for money, but when it comes to fishing, there's not a whole lot of that sitting around waiting to be claimed. Tournament fishing is a different game, a smaller subset of what we do, and while there's often cash winnings involved, that would be a tough way to try to make a living, pay a mortgage and raise a family. So it's not about earning power.

In most endeavors, and most sports, the pros are the luminaries, the performers, the top athletes. Our featured pros this month are certainly some of the best at what they do, but what they do is a little different. Ours is not a spectator sport: We don't go out on the water with a captain to watch them catch fish. We go with them so we can catch fish.

For fishing pros, success, day in and day out, is measured by the success of someone else: the anglers who fish with them. At the end of the day, they succeed when they make someone else the star, as opposed to shining their own.

So what they do is all about discovery and sharing. We think you'll find something in what these pros have to say that helps you be a better angler. This issue is packed with their hard-won

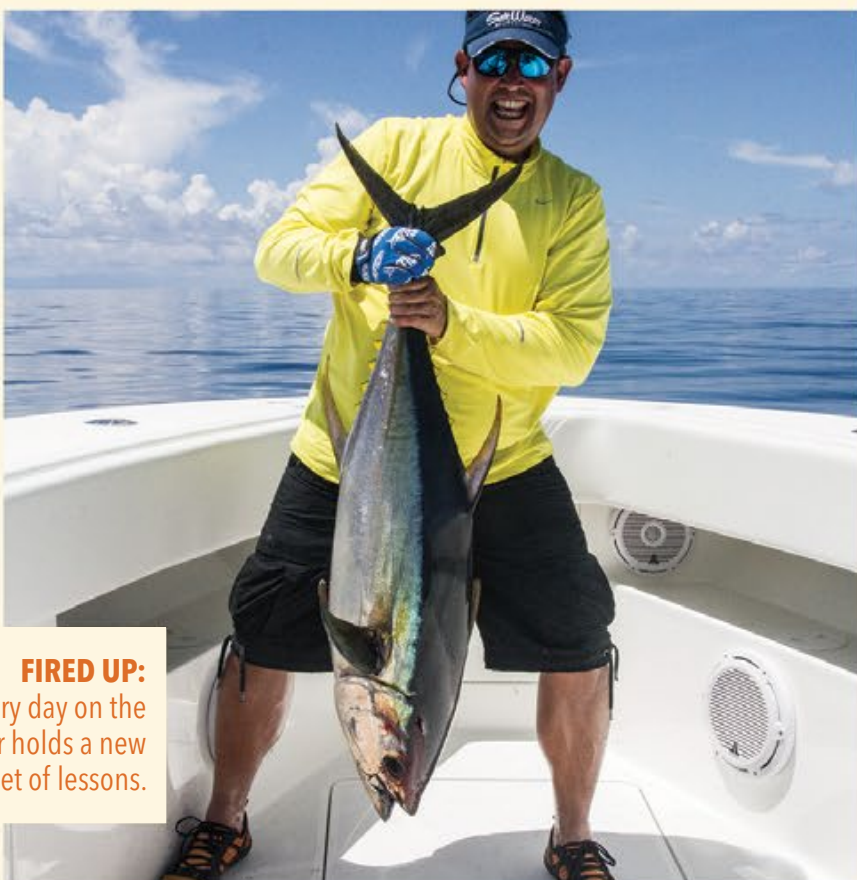
A FISHING PRO'S SUCCESS, DAY IN AND DAY OUT, IS MEASURED BY THE SUCCESS OF SOMEONE ELSE."

experience and knowledge.

It's also about feeling the adventure and excitement that every day on the water brings. There's always something new to learn in this game — and something to look forward to. It still works for me. I'm fired up to fish for calico bass in the kelp off Southern California. 🍷

Glenn Law

Glenn Law
Editor-in-Chief
glenn.law@bonniercorp.com



FIRED UP:

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NEWS LINES

STATE-BASED SNAPPER PLAN

FIVE GULF OF MEXICO STATES MOVE TOWARD
TAKING OVER RED SNAPPER MANAGEMENT.

BIG SHIFT:

Gulf red snapper
management could
soon be in the hands
of the states.



Directors of the fish and wildlife agencies from Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas announced a new agreement for state-based management of Gulf of Mexico red snapper, presently managed by the

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council.

The agreement would transfer management from the Council to the states through the proposed Gulf States Red Snapper Management Authority. "It's clear that the states are best equipped to manage this valuable fishery. It's

time we give them that opportunity," says Mike Nussman, president and CEO of the American Sportfishing Association.

Under this structure, each state would implement a plan for its waters out to 200 miles. "States have proven to be highly successful at fish and wildlife management in

a way that conserves natural resources while allowing for reasonable public access," says Jeff Angers, president of the Center for Coastal Conservation. "Faced with an untenable situation, the states have risen to the challenge and collectively identified a clear path to a more balanced fishery."

HOOK QUERY//

When George Poveromo wrote about cedar plugs, he thought spacer beads above the hook would increase hookups. He recommended using a circle hook. Has George tried this and did it work?

Brian Willison
via email

Poveromo responds: "Yes, it works very well. Adding spacer beads above the eye of an inline circle hook (or J hook) allows the fish to fully clamp down on the hook for more solid hookups. We've caught blackfin tuna, dolphin and kingfish with this setup."

—Ed.

PROP CORRECTION//

Working for an authorized Honda outboard dealer, I have propped countless boats over the years. I'd like to point out one error in the Propeller 101 article [March] and make an important point, which was lightly touched on. Your article stated, "If your boat is currently revving to only 5,400 rpm, adding 2 inches of pitch should put it in ideal operating range." This should have stated: subtracting 2 inches of pitch. The importance of propping to the recommended WOT range should not be glossed over. When I sea-trial a new Honda, I am required to verify the WOT. Honda wants to see their engines in the upper end of the recommended range. A boat engine is constantly going uphill. A prop with too much pitch is like trying to ride a 10-speed bicycle in high gear up a hill. This labors the engine and shortens its life. Generally, unless your boat can reach 50 mph, any prop over 17 pitch is too much. The average boat in my market is propped correctly with 15 or 17 inches of pitch, regardless of the number of engines.

Joseph Cumberland
via email

PRO RELEASE///

I am an avid striped fisherman in New Jersey and Massachusetts. We are witnessing fewer quality fish every year. We are harvesting too many. There is a lot of science, but what common sense and Mother Nature tell us trumps the studies.

We need to harvest less fish, especially breeding-size stripers. I made a trip to Black Lake in New York a few years ago and that lake is filled with fish. I asked, why such good fishing? The answer was the guys back in the '80s were taking too many fish, realized their mistake and now practice just catch-and-release. Same scenario, I thought, upon returning from Guatemala, a Third World country with world-class sailfish — all catch-and-release. That says it all. Keep promoting catch-and-release whenever possible.

Jeff Petri
Allentown, Pennsylvania



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SPARE PARTS?/

I happened to be looking at some old issues and noticed the striper on the cover of the October 2014 issue. There appears to be something black sticking out of the gills of the fish. What could it be?

Ricky Pitt
via email

It's a pectoral fin that looks out of place due to the angle of the fish. —Ed.

DESIGN BEEF//

I'm probably in the minority, but I don't like your new format at all. Splashing

color over every page has detracted from the layout, and it has not improved the magazine. I'm old school. I can read without the print being in various colors. I actually feel that the glut of pictures has interrupted the continuity of some articles. It might be prettier, but it has lost some of its function. I have enjoyed *SWS* for years, but this change is not for the better.

Don Ward
via email



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NEW BATTLES///

After moving on from the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance, I am working with the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance now. It's a nice change of pace to be fighting over a rebuilding resource (red snapper), rather than a declining one (cod). But with it comes a whole suite of new issues. I saw Rip Cunningham's article in the March issue and want to commend him on a well-written piece. While we may agree to disagree on a number of points in the article, the story was a step above the jargon-filled, inflammatory and outright incorrect media statements I've seen in the Gulf over the last 18 months.

Eric Brazer Jr.,
Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish
Shareholders' Alliance,
via email

NEWS LINES

NEW YORK STRIPER REGS/



SAVING STRIPERS: New bag and size limits in New York promise a 25 percent take reduction.

CONTINUES P. 20 ➔

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To comply with the Atlantic States Marine Fishery Commission's (ASMFC) mandated 25 percent harvest reduction of striped bass, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has established new regional bag and size limits:

1. Marine and coastal district (south of George Washington Bridge): one fish, 28 inches or larger during the April 15 through Dec. 15 season.
2. Hudson River (all tributaries north of George Washington Bridge and all inland waters): one fish, 18 to 28 inches or one fish over 40 inches during the April 15 through Dec. 15 season.
3. Delaware River: one fish, 28 inches or larger, with no closed season.

ETHANOL OUT OF FUEL?



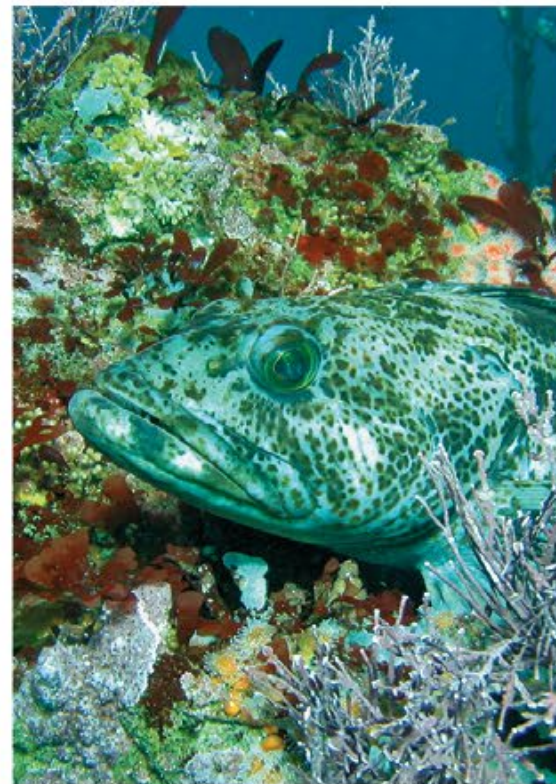
PURE FUEL: The boating industry supports the reduction of corn ethanol levels in fuel.

Senators Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., and Pat Toomey, R-Pa., introduced bill S.577, the Corn Ethanol Mandate Elimination Act of 2015, which would kill the corn ethanol mandate of the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS).

The powerful corn lobby has been pushing to increase the percentage of ethanol, which threatens boat engines and marine fuel systems.

Although the new bill falls short of capping the amount of ethanol required in motor fuels, if passed, it could lead to a rethinking of the Renewable Fuel Standard and eliminate the threat of E15 fuels mandated for use in boats.

The boating industry hopes this emerging strong bicameral approach to RFS reform will result in congressional action this year.



LIMIT CHANGE: Lingcod limits are among the changes under new California regulations.

CALIFORNIA'S NEW RULES///

The California Fish and Game Commission adopted several changes to its current fishing regulations for state waters up to 3 miles from shore. New bag limits include:

1. An increase in the lingcod bag limit from two to three fish.
2. A sub-bag limit of five black rockfish within the 10 fish Rockfish, Cabezon, Greenling (RCG) complex bag limit.
3. Take and possession of bronze-spotted rockfish, canary rockfish, cowcod and yelloweye rockfish are prohibited statewide.

Among the changes is a statewide closure on California scorpionfish from Sept. 1 through Dec. 31, and new open-season dates and allowable fishing depths for recreational Groundfish Management Areas:

NORTHERN: Open May 15 through Oct. 31, in 120 feet or less.

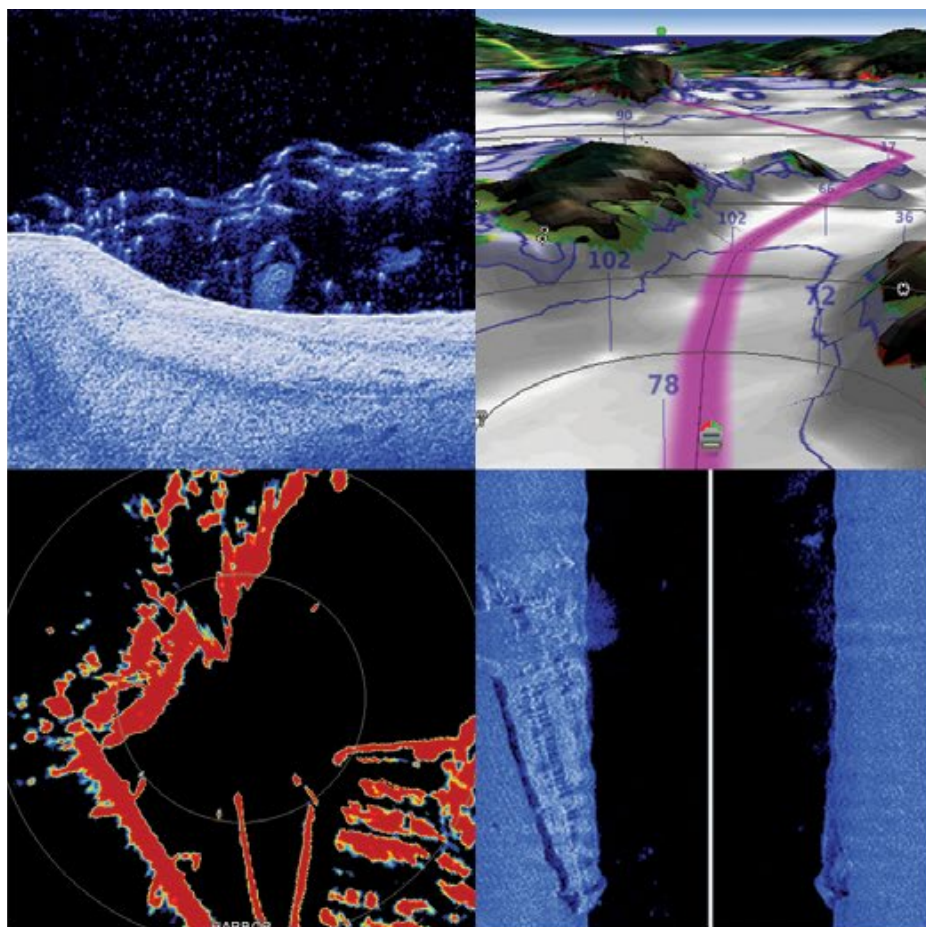
MENDOCINO: Open May 15 through Oct. 31, in 120 feet or less.

SAN FRANCISCO: Open April 15 through Dec. 31, in 180 feet or less.

CENTRAL: Open April 1 through Dec. 31, in 240 feet or less.

SOUTHERN: Open March 1 through Dec. 31, in 360 feet or less.

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TALK ON THE DOCK

05/2015 / VOL.76 / NO 05



BEST RED

Lisa Garza took advantage of a recent holiday weekend to wet a line. She caught the largest fish of her angling career, this hefty 38-inch, 12-pound redfish, while fishing with charter guide Capt. Gary Cooper off Estes Flats, near Port Aransas, Texas.

DROP US A LINE

Got a piece of good news to share? Want to gripe? Like to see your thoughts on the pages of *Salt Water Sportsman*? Send your letters, manuscripts and any relevant comments to editor@saltwatersportsman.com or via U.S. mail: SWS Editor, 460 N. Orlando Ave., Suite 200, Winter Park, FL 32789. Unsolicited manuscripts are welcomed but will not be acknowledged or returned unless accompanied by an SASE. We are not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts or photographs. **CUSTOMER SERVICE AND SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES:** saltwatersportsman.com/cs or 800-759-2127. Outside the United States: 800-979-6828; Back Issues: 800-464-2819; Bulk Reprints: 877-652-5295, ext. 117.



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TRAVELING ANGLER RYDER TREMBLAY, 7

Ryder has landed many species in his home state, along with stripers and blues in Connecticut; smallmouth bass in Lake Winnepesaukee, New Hampshire; landlocked salmon through the ice in Moosehead Lake, Maine; and king salmon in Lake Ontario. His goal is to catch a fish in all 50 states. He hopes to be a pro hockey player when he grows up, but his idea for retirement is to teach kids how to fish from his own charter boat.

South Hadley,
Massachusetts



TALENTED CONSERVATIONIST GRACIE SHARP, 12

Gracie is an honor student and award-winning gymnast, but her first love is fishing. Come rain or shine, she is ready to stay on the water all day. A junior member of the CCA and contributor to the Mobile Bay 5 Rivers Delta Center in Spanish Fort, Alabama, Gracie believes in conservation of backwaters, bays and the Gulf, and she aspires to be a marine biologist.

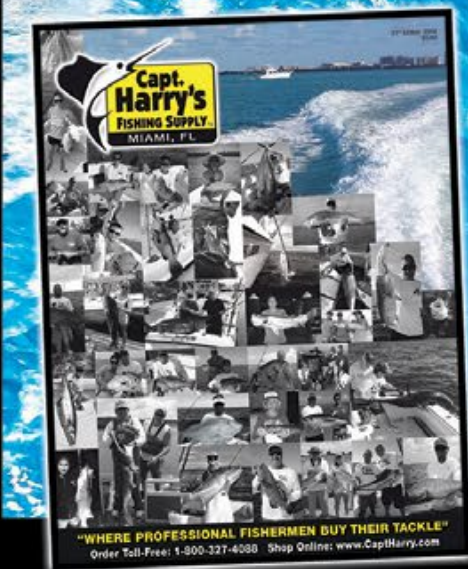
Foley, Alabama



DETERMINED FISHERMAN CAMERON SHAW, 11

Fishing off North Carolina with his dad on their brand-new 25 Gamefish, Cameron landed his first fish: a gaffer dolphin. Born with spina bifida, Cameron has difficulty walking and can't play sports, but he didn't let that challenge stop him from fighting the fish, for 15 minutes with a stand-up belt, to his dad's waiting gaff. Recovering well from his fifth major surgery, he eagerly anticipates fishing again later this season.

Chesapeake, Virginia



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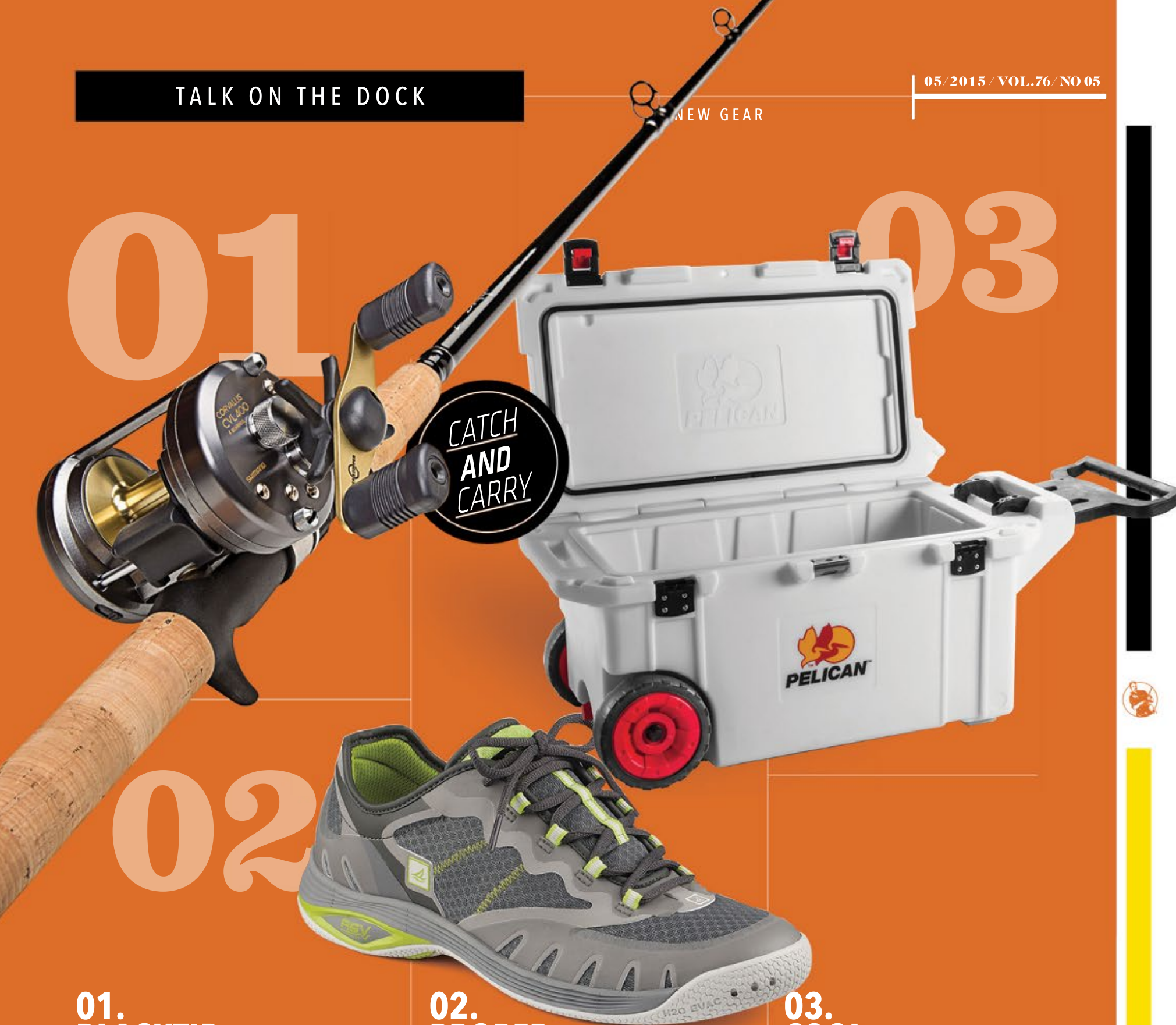
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02. PROPER FOOTING

A classic favorite gets an update this season with Sperry's Kingfisher 2 performance shoe. The lighter, sleeker styling reduces shock and vibration by 50 percent, a 25 percent improvement over previous models. Expect maximum traction and stability thanks to the Adaptive Wave-Siping feature and Hydro Grip rubber for a super sticky outsole that disperses water across wet and slippery surfaces. The Kingfisher 2 also increases cushioning and comfort from heel to toe with enhanced ASV Technology, which helps offset the effects of pounding waves and engine vibrations to protect back, knees and hips for daylong comfort. \$140; sperry.com

03. COOL WHEELS

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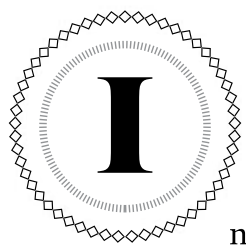
LIMIT CHANGES:
Some states have crafted their own catch reduction measures for striped bass.



CAN WE ACTUALLY COUNT?

UNCERTAIN STEPS ON THE ROAD TO STRIPED BASS RECOVERY.

BY RIP CUNNINGHAM



I It seems like I have not written about striped bass for a long time. Maybe no news is good news — or at least not bad news. As this year's fishing gets underway, most states will have some new regulations for the taking of striped bass. So check the regs. I think this is a positive step, but I will also say that I am not sure of how big or little that step really is.

This past summer and fall, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) has been studying the results of the latest striped bass assessment and using those results to craft new regulations for this popular fish. They put the

proposed suite of measures out for public comment. What they received back was a lot of public sentiment for the most conservative option, which was implementing a 25 percent reduction of the 2013 catch for 2015. A lot of folks look at the downward trend of the spawning-stock biomass and they feel that this proposed change is not big enough. I honestly do not know because I wonder how they can predict future behavior of the recreational angler by looking at the past. In what appears to be a changing fishery, this could be the classic recipe for trouble. I am not saying that the folks who work on this at the ASMFC are not competent. Some are the best in the

business, but, in my opinion, there are too many unknown variables to allow for real accuracy.

The ASMFC Striped Bass Board with input from the Technical Committee selected a 25 percent reduction for the 2013 coastal states' harvest and a Chesapeake Bay states reduction of 20.5 percent. The Board recommended a limit of one fish at 28 inches to achieve the desired reduction for coastal states, and, as has happened in the past, the ASMFC allows states to implement different regulations as long as the Technical Committee can determine that there is conservation equivalency with the recommended measures. Ahhhh, there's the rub. Equivalency can be one thing on paper and completely different in reality.

Let's take a state that simply agrees with the ASMFC recommended reduction from two fish at 28 inches

THERE'S THE RUB. EQUIVALENCY CAN BE ONE THING ON PAPER AND COMPLETELY DIFFERENT IN REALITY."

minimum to one fish at 28 inches. Some would immediately think this a 50 percent reduction, and it would be if everyone always caught their two fish every time they went out. But they do not. A lot of folks never keep a single fish. They like to catch and release everything. All of this information can be gleaned from the reams of data gathered by federal and state surveys, as well as catch composition and size samplings conducted by port samplers. Is all that data spot on? Probably not, but



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it is a good starting point. So, managers determine that going from two fish to one fish will give approximately a 25 percent reduction on paper, everything else being equal. Oh, they also accept a 50 percent chance of success — which also happens to be a 50 percent chance for failure.

My question is whether everything

else will be equal, and I am focused on the recreational catch. Will going to one fish change anglers' behavior? Will striped bass still be a primary target for all the anglers who targeted them previously? Will going to a one-fish limit cause the number of trips to drop substantially? Will the fish be in the same areas in the same numbers

as previous years? We know that as fish populations shrink, there tend to be greater variations, especially near the ends of their migration patterns. Will forage be nearshore or offshore, where legal taking of striped bass is prohibited? There are a lot of variables.

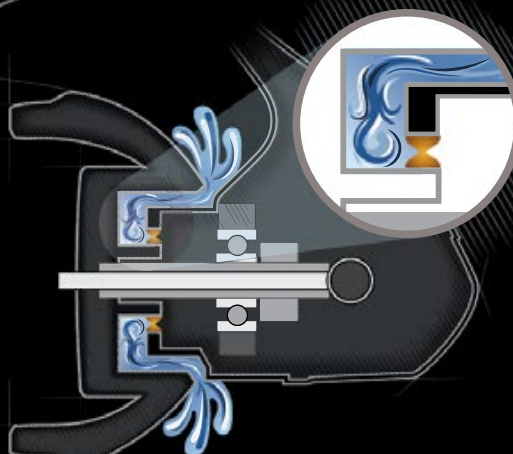
Other states have come up with their own plans. New Jersey has crafted a plan to have one fish between 28 and 43 inches and a second fish above 43 inches. I realize that on paper, New Jersey managers have calculated that this will actually come up with a 25.1 percent reduction in catch. I do not believe the current methodology is accurate to the .1 percent level, but that is just me. New York proposed a somewhat similar



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WILL A ONE-FISH LIMIT CAUSE THE NUMBER OF TRIPS TO DROP?"

plan, although they have a 28 percent reduction. So, in one state, there is a reduction to one fish that produces a 25 percent reduction; in a second state, there is still a two-fish limit and this produces a 28 percent reduction? That points out just how variable the catch composition is along the coast and why I am skeptical that predicting the future by looking in the rearview mirror can produce the desired results — not to mention the impact of pushing at least some of the effort onto the segment of the population that needs the most protection: the big old females.

ASMFC is moving in the right direction. Since striped bass are on the verge of being overfished, it would seem to me that more precautionary actions would be better. Because the likelihood of success is the same as that of failure and since, in my opinion, the ability to estimate the actual catch is iffy, I am concerned that the cuts might not get the job done. 🐟



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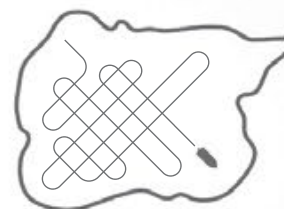
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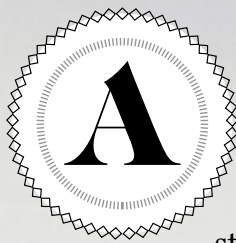


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Among the multitude of cool fishing options, casting artificial lures to striped bass in the Northeast ranks up at the top of the list. Perhaps the best thing about chucking hardware at bass stems from the fact that you can target them in many different habitats and water depths, which all require different tactics and tackle.



JOHN BROWNLEE

For instance, you can stalk bass on white sand flats, a sort of northeastern version of sight-casting to bonefish. You can also cast lures around the semi-submerged rocks scattered along innumerable shorelines, trying to draw a strike from a bass lurking in a deep tidal pool. And when the bait schools get thick, artificials that imitate the bait in

question, from sand eels to bunker, make it easy to pick off a hungry fish looking for a quick meal.

Many guides in the Northeast have perfected

the artificial lure game, and I always love listening to the pros debate each other as to which lure works best. As in most parts of the world, you won't get a single answer,

but by paying attention you can come away with a range of choices that will certainly perform in most of the aforementioned circumstances. We spoke with three of the best to hear their thoughts on the subject.

Paul Dixon

Fishing stripers on the flats calls for specialized

QUICK RELEASE:

Capt. Paul Dixon takes the time to revive a nice bass before releasing it.



**GUIDE'S SECRET
STRIPER SLIDER**

BIG BASS:

Capt. John Luchka (right) and angler Matt White pose for a quick photo before releasing a chunky striper caught on a lure.

**TSUNAMI SWIM SHAD**

lures. “In the spring when sight-fishing is best, there is really only one type of method that I employ,” says Capt. Paul Dixon of Montauk, New York. “Small, soft baits using light tackle. My favorite is a 3-inch white Slug-Go thrown with a 7-foot light-action rod spooled with 15-pound braid and 20-pound

fluorocarbon leader. The bass are spooky, and for spin-casting, nothing beats the 3-inch Slug-Go. Nothing!”

Dixon adds that methods change with the seasons. “During summer and into fall in Montauk when the sand eels are thick, my number one choice is a Tsunami olive or black-back 7-inch sand eel, worked at a steady, medium

to fast retrieve. It’s deadly. If bunker or any wide-body bait are plentiful, I switch to the Tsunami Swim Shad. They’re great for going deep.”

But Dixon also admits to being a fan of topwater plugging. “My favorite is the

Guide’s Secret 7-inch Striper Slider. Walk the dog, baby!”

John Luchka

“We get a spring and a fall run of stripers off the New Jersey coast, and we see pre- and post-spawn fish from the Hudson River stock and the Delaware and Chesapeake stock,” says Capt. John Luchka, of Point Pleasant, New Jersey. “When stripers are present and feeding on bunker,

IT’S PRETTY COOL WHEN FISH IN THE 30-POUND CLASS JUMP OUT OF THE WATER TO GRAB A LURE.”

the most exciting way is to watch them come up and crash a Yo-Zuri Surface Bull. This plug throws a lot of water and also rattles, which helps the bass locate the lure since in many cases, the water is murky.” According to Luchka, any color will produce, and a solid cadence with an occasional pause entices strikes from bass working a bunker school. “Casting on the outskirts of the school, versus into the frothy frenzy where the artificial gets easily

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lost, is your best strategy because your lure will invite more competition.”

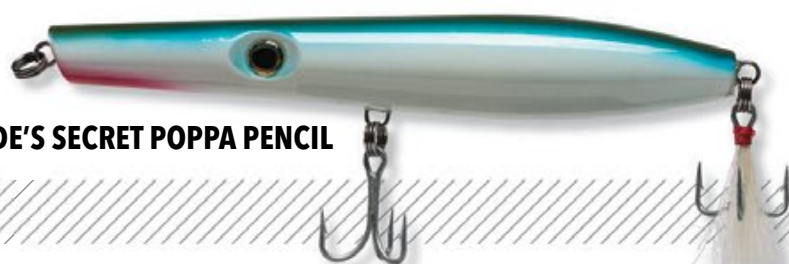
But Luchka also likes swimming baits on occasion. “In the fall when the herring appear, we like to use a pearl Sebile Magic Swimmer, which is more of a search bait, when there isn’t a topwater bite visible,” he says. “We’re fishing structure and marks on our Simrad sounder with CHIRP then because fish might be feeding just below the surface.”

John McMurray

“I’ve got a lot of favorites, but I’ve gotta go with the Guide’s Secret Poppa Pencil,” declares Capt. John McMurray of Long Island, New York. “It’s big — 8 1/2 inches and 3 ounces — arguably the largest pencil popper around, and it generally has to be fished on heavier gear than I’m accustomed to. But damn if it isn’t the best plug to throw when



POP GOES THE STRIPER: John McMurray lips a hefty striped bass that engulfed a larger popper.

**GUIDE'S SECRET POPPA PENCIL**

big stripers are on bunker.”

McMurray says the Poppa Pencil has unique attributes that contribute to its effectiveness. “It has a big, fat tail that tapers into the pencil head,” he continued. “When worked in the traditional push-and-pull/jerk, it slashes

back and forth in the water, walking the dog but spitting and pushing water at the same time. Drag it across a bunker school that’s got fish on it and it’s game on, man.”

“It’s pretty darn cool when fish in the 30-pound class leap out of the water to grab a lure,” McMurray adds.

“It does a pretty good job of imitating a 9- or 10-inch wounded bunker. But I think the way these things move and shake is just so seductive that it doesn’t really matter much what bait the stripers are on.”

By loading your tackle box with a mix of hard- and soft-bodied lures of different sizes and actions, you’ll be prepared for any scenario in which you might find striped bass this summer, and we all know that preparation is the key to success. 🍷



GEORGE POVEROMO, SWS contributing editor, has shared his angling techniques for over 30 years.

EXPERT TIP**ROUGH-WATER TROLLING**

Trolling in rough seas can be challenging, but key adjustments ensure your spread’s lifelike action.

Weighted baits should take precedence because they run below the surface and track and stay in the water better than baits skipping on top.

Transom release clips and outrigger clips positioned halfway up their poles reduce the fishing

line angle of entry into the water, and when lines closely parallel the surface, baits are more likely to stay in the water. Positioning baits farther back than normal also helps.

Tweak distances based on wind direction and speed. And drop the downwind baits farther back than the upwind lines. This keeps them from crossing and prevents tangles.



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01

ZIP IT HOLDER

For rods that lack a ring to keep your lure or hook in place, or rods with K guides that don't hold lures well, a simple solution is to zip-tie a split ring just above the reel seat. This creates an instant lure and hook holder that won't damage the guides or their ceramic inserts.

Peter Lynch

West Tisbury,
Massachusetts

02

CAST-N-TROLL FLOAT

This simple rig from my home country of South Africa uses a cork shaped into a chisel nose as a float to keep your bait off the ocean bed and a head to cast and crank or troll the bait behind a boat or kayak. Prepare a wire trace with a swivel at one end, slide the cork head (previously shaped with sandpaper and painted if desired) onto the trace, and attach a hook at the other end. Fillet a sardine or bait of choice, thread it up the wire trace and bind it with thread. Unlike standard lures, this setup gives you the option to use natural baits and work them like artificials.

Alan Bennett

Myrtle Beach,
South Carolina

03

BUDGET ANCHOR

Shallow-water anchors cost up to \$2,000 for a deluxe type, while a simple shallow-water pin anchor is available for \$65 to \$150. But there's a more economical option. For \$8.50 I purchased an 8-foot, 5/8-inch galvanized electrical ground rod at a home-improvement store. I drilled a hole at one end and attached an anchor shackle, to which I tied an anchor rope. For about \$10, I have a very effective anchor pin that I can spear into the bottom to hold the boat. I use two pins when current and wind conditions require me to anchor both ends of the boat.

D.W. Eggleston

Jenkinsville,
South Carolina



02



03

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**THEY'RE HERE!**

Tarpon are on the move along both Florida coasts. It's time to test your mettle with the silver king.

change course to grab the fly; too close and you will, of course, spook the fish.

When you get the bite, stay cool and let the fish turn its head. Once it turns, set the hook with a couple of good jabs of the rod in the opposite direction and be ready for one of the most explosive exits in fishing. Next, focus on clearing your line and allow the fish to settle down from its initial run. Then, it's time to get to work, applying maximum pressure

BIG SILVER

THE ULTIMATE BIG-GAME CHALLENGE INSHORE.

BY CARTER ANDREWS



CARTER ANDREWS, TV host of *The Obsession of Carter Andrews*, speaks from decades of experience pursuing saltwater fish around the world.

Undoubtedly, the tarpon is one of the world's most exciting game fish. When you find yourself standing on the bow of a flats skiff, fly rod in hand, watching 100-plus-pound fish come right at you, it's hard not to get weak in the knees. A number of places offer good action, but every spring, thousands of tarpon migrate

down to South Florida, making for tremendous fishing opportunities that attract fly anglers from all over — including yours truly.

Laid-Up Tactics

Out on the water, you typically face two different scenarios: You will either be casting to laid-up tarpon or to swimming fish. Laid-up fish, which usually pose the best

option for a successful hookup, move slowly, and many times, they roll on the surface. Casting to a stationary or slow-moving tarpon isn't overly challenging, but the trick is to present the fly in such a way that the fish won't have to go out of its way to eat it. Too far and the tarpon won't see it or plainly refuse to

LAID-UP TARPON

Drop the fly softly 3 feet from the fish
A small strike zone demands precise presentation
Keep a keen eye on the tarpon's reaction

GENTLE PERSUASION:

Twitch the fly just enough to get the fish's attention and tease it subtly.

at all times to bring the fight to an end in a reasonable amount of time and ensure a healthy release.



PREFERRED SETUP

When chasing these larger migratory tarpon in the Keys, I choose a 12-weight rod and a matching reel with a smooth drag. My preferred setup is a G.Loomis NRX rod with a Hatch reel and Rio Tarpon fly line. I bring two outfits on the boat — one with floating line, the other with intermediate — because some days, fish happily swim high in the water column; other days, they just stay close to the bottom and don't respond to a fly near the surface.



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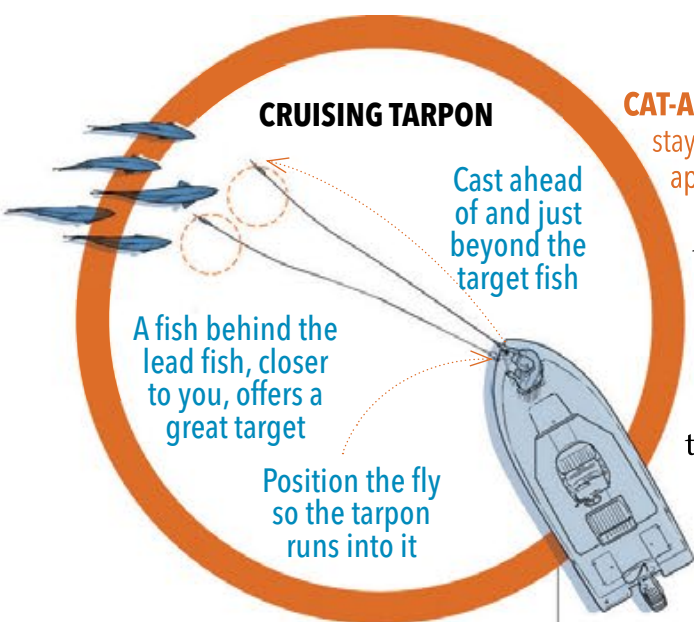


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**CRUISING TARPON**

Cast ahead of and just beyond the target fish

A fish behind the lead fish, closer to you, offers a great target

Position the fly so the tarpon runs into it

CAT-AND-MOUSE: The fly must stay in front of the fish and appear to be trying to flee.

the way. You often hear people say those fish won't eat, but they do. It just takes more finesse to draw a take.

The key is to get the fly in the fish's strike zone, right in its face, without spooking it. You

do that by casting ahead of the fish and letting it swim into your fly as you start to strip. The closer the fish gets to your fly, the better your chances of getting an eat. If a tarpon starts to track your fly (following it closely), it's up to you to entice it to commit. Sometimes it's just a

matter of changing the pace. Other times jiggling the rod tip to make the fly wiggle as you strip is what does it.

Cruising tarpon are typically swimming faster than it looks. You must anticipate that and cast just ahead of where you think the fish will be when you deliver the fly. You'll need to lead the fish even more if it's swimming near the bottom and you are using an intermediate line. The line and fly require additional time to sink to the fish's level.

Leader Solutions

You can buy pre-made tarpon leaders, but I tie my own and use as long a leader as I can get away with: 12 to 14 feet on calm days. Tarpon have big eyes and see really

well in calm, clear water, so I also opt for fluorocarbon. On windy days — common in South Florida in spring — I scale back to 9- or 10-foot leaders. With a chop on the water, chances of spooking fish decrease, and since a shorter leader turns over better, you'll cast more accurately.

By the way, set the drag at a third of the class tippet strength. And if you make your own leaders, remember to add a shock tippet at the end to prevent chafing from a tarpon's coarse lips.

When you take up tarpon fishing, you are bound to experience many heart-pounding moments. And once you put a silver king in the air, you will be hooked for life. 🐟

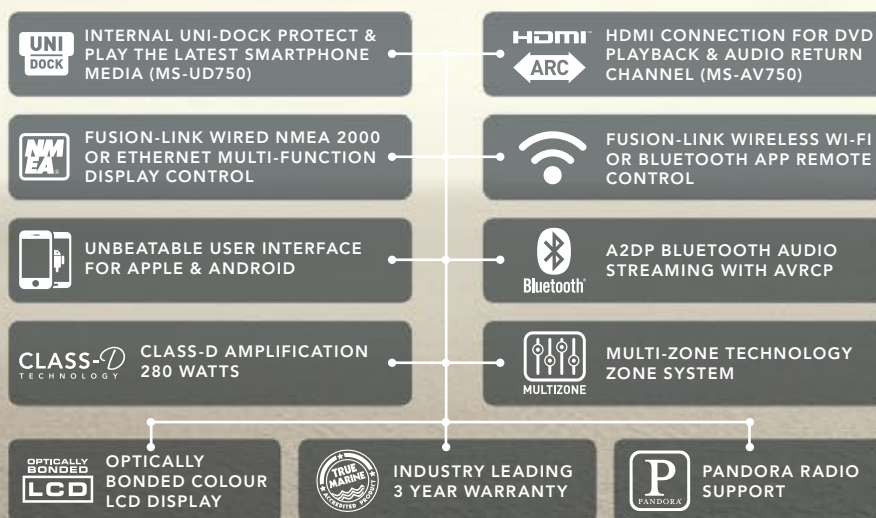


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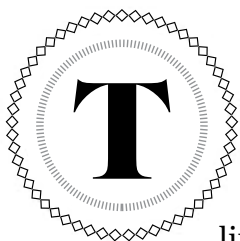
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BY CAPT. DAVE LEAR



The timing is not coincidental. Even though a limited number of new outboards were launched during the recent recession, that doesn't mean the R&D pipeline was bone dry — in fact, it was just the opposite. So now, with the boating industry on the upswing, innovative outboards are splashing faster than a kid at a water slide. And that's great news for anglers in the market

for a new boat or replacement engines.

Evinrude got things rolling with the next-generation E-TEC G2 direct-injection two-strokes with a new block and piston/cylinder design to enhance combustion and improve fuel economy. Other manufacturers quickly followed suit. Yamaha is expanding its V Max SHO line of four-strokes by shedding weight and adding torque and power. The result is

better top-end speed, better fuel efficiency and more rigging and control options, especially for midsize center-consoles, bay and flats boats. Not to be outdone, Suzuki introduced the DF200AP at the Miami International Boat Show, an inline four-cylinder four-stroke with a keyless starting system, electronic throttle and shift and selectable rotation. Its semi-direct air intake shunts cool air into the manifold, which improves acceleration and speed.

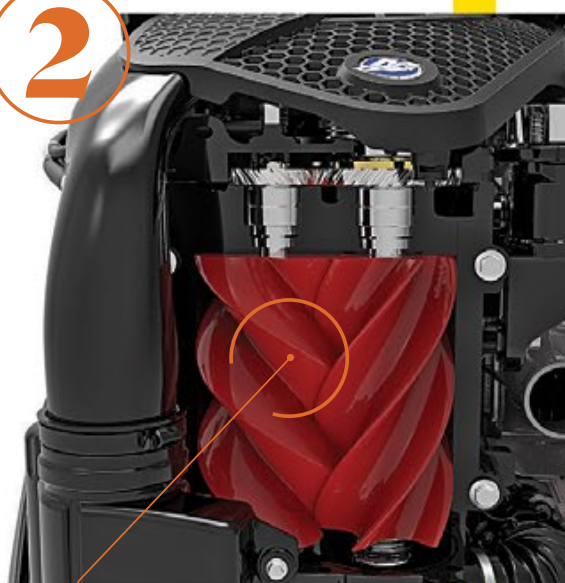
Mercury Marine also used the Florida stage to announce two major additions to the Verado 2.6-liter four-stroke family of outboards: The Verado 350 and Verado 400R, supercharged six-cylinder engines that

were more than five years in research and development.

"The benefits of a supercharged outboard are better fuel economy, lighter weight and a compact design, yet it still delivers the torque and power needed to get the boat on plane fast," explains Mercury category manager Larry Teeling. "Our approach has been a deliberate evolution of technology to make sure we built an engine customers wanted without over-stressing the boat itself." The dry weight for the new 350 starts at just 688 pounds.

The Verado's power boost comes from the new intake that efficiently delivers fresh air directly to the supercharger. Heat sucks power and increases the risk of parts failure. The redesigned vented flywheel cover dissipates heat by as much as 10 degrees over its predecessor. With a genuine 350 hp at the prop, it produces 16 percent more power than the Verado 300. It also offers better fuel efficiency throughout much of the power curve.

2



2. CHARGE IT: A water-cooled supercharger on the new Verados feeds more air to the combustion chambers at a lower temperature.

1



1. BREATHE EASY: Increased flow of charged air boosts economy, efficiency and performance in Mercury's new design.

SIMRAD

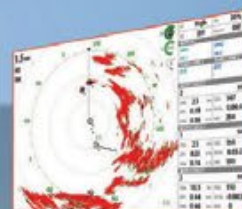
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MERCURY VERADO 2.6-LITER

The 350 hp Verado boasts reduced weight and higher efficiency. The 400R Racing Series operates at extended rpm and can run on 89 octane fuel.



EVINRUDE E-TEC G2

Redesigned E-TEC two-strokes features direct injection with stratified low rpm combustion in 200, 225, 250 and 300 hp models.



YAMAHA VMAX SHO

V6 4.2-liter Super High Output in 200, 225 and 250 hp models shed weight, as well as boost performance and fuel efficiency.



SUZUKI DF200AP

The in-line four-cylinder DF200 with a revamped intake system, increased compression ratio and a keyless start system.

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COBIA

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HEWES

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The 400R racing version turns up to 7,000 rpm, and the electronic knock control lets it run safely on 89 octane fuel when the recommended 91 octane premium is not available. It includes the racing-circuit proven Sport Master gear case and advanced midsection for high-performance handling and stability at top speeds.

So what do these engineering advances mean for the angling public? Primarily, more choices. Enhanced horsepower, better efficiency and reduced weight mean less is more. Dual engines can be rigged instead of triples, saving money on the initial costs as well as overall maintenance without sacrificing performance. Single-engine applications benefit, too. With less weight, there is less

strain on the boat transom. Better fuel efficiency also equates to a longer range per tank and savings at the pump. Aside from higher speeds, with more horsepower, the engine doesn't have to labor as much at the upper-operating level, which reduces wear and extends its life.

"We've already done some testing with the new Verados, and they are very impressive," says Wylie Nagler, president of Yellowfin Yachts. "They are quiet, with a lot of power and a lot of torque." Yellowfin had a 39 center console on display at the Miami boat show with quad Verado 350s. The company's Carbon Elite Series 24 bay model rigged with a single 400R has also been running around 80 mph, top

end, in early sea trials.

"If you can get more horsepower, most Yellowfin buyers will opt for that," Nagler adds. "A lot of people also prefer lighter engines to keep the boat as light as possible. Look at what the auto industry

is doing with four-cylinder turbocharged engines right now. As the technology in the marine industry keeps progressing, we're going to see even lighter weights and higher horsepower outboards in the next few years." 🌀

MERCURY VERADO PERFORMANCE COMPARISON

300 VERADO VS. NEW 350 VERADO



BOSTON WHALER 370 OUTRAGE W/ TRIPLE MERCURY 300 VERADO ENGINES W/ TRIPLE MERCURY 350 VERADO ENGINES

RPM	MPH		GPH	
	300	350	300	350
4,000	32.3	34.4	35.2	34.1
4,500	38.3	40.1	42.9	41.8
5,000	43.5	46.7	55.0	54.8
5,500	48.7	49.0	72.7	65.3
6,000	52.8	54.3	89.9	91.4
6,200		55.5		92.8
6,325	54.7		89.9	

THIS IS WHAT YOU BETTER BRING.



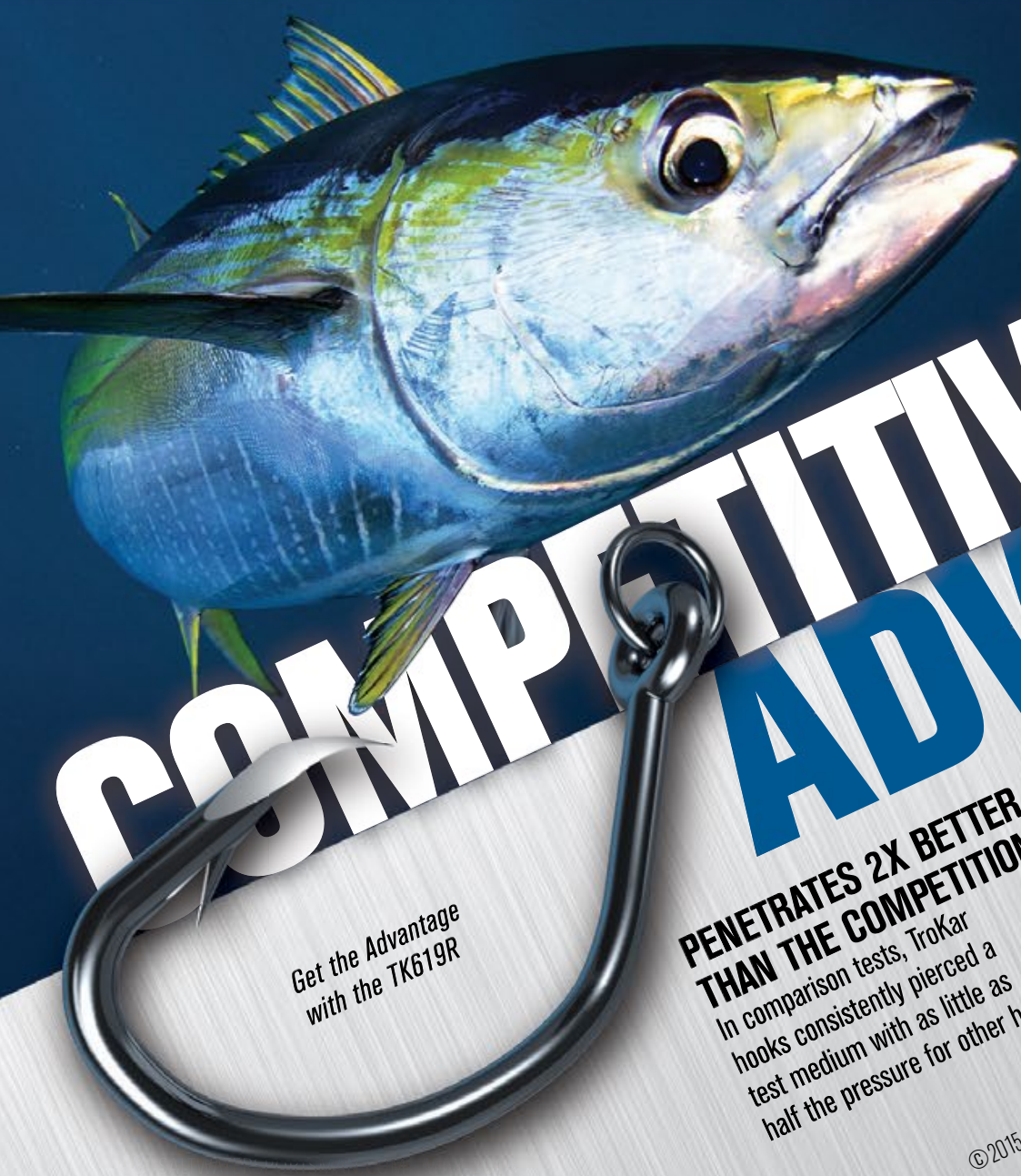
COBIA
THE SMARTEST MOVE ON THE WATER

SCOUT 42LFX

With its sleek aesthetics, state-of-the-art technology and elegant appointments that Scout claims resemble those of a private jet, the 42LFX is the result of three years of R&D. The epoxy-infused double-stepped hull lends extra stability while reducing weight. And the long list of standard features includes a full transom walk-through platform, gas shock-assisted hatches, fish boxes with overboard discharge, retractable raw- and freshwater hoses, Garmin electronics, Wi-Fi router and Bluetooth compatibility, to name a few. A hydraulic portside beach platform, retractable awning and underwater deck and bow cameras are among the numerous options available for owners to add a personal touch. Plus there's also an optional SeaKeeper gyro stabilizer.

scoutboats.com

LENGTH: 42'2"
BEAM: 13'1"
DRAFT: 28"
WEIGHT: 15,800 LB.
FUEL: 500 GAL.
MAX HP: 1,675
PRICE: \$752,090
 w/ quad Mercury 350XL



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with the TK619R

**PENETRATES 2X BETTER
THAN THE COMPETITION**
 In comparison tests, TroKar
hooks consistently pierced a
test medium with as little as
half the pressure for other hooks.

Competitors' Hooks

TROKAR



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SURGICALLY SHARPENED
TECHNOLOGY:**
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point uses technology originally
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p: Mark Welsh



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Our 50 years of innovation has helped us perfect what really matters — amplifying the thrill of human experience. Smith **ChromaPop™** lenses are the most advanced polarized lenses in the world. See true color and razor sharp definition. The Dockside.

The experience is everything.™



LENGTH: 30'1"
BEAM: 9'6"
DRAFT: 22"
WEIGHT: 5,500 LB.
FUEL: 220 GAL.
MAX HP: 600
PRICE: \$138,010
 w/ twin Yamaha F250XA

RELEASE 301RX

The 301RX is a versatile center console loaded with features for the serious angler and amenities to provide comfort during extended fishing trips and family outings. Ten flush-mounted holders on the gunwales and horizontal racks to port and starboard offer plenty of rod storage, while three in-deck fish boxes provide ample space to ice down your catch. Recessed bow rail, twin forward bench seats with storage, hanging anchor locker, raw-water washdown, fresh water at the transom, aerated livewell, cockpit courtesy lights, leaning post, walk-in head with electric toilet, freshwater shower and sink, auto-retractable trim tabs and a swim ladder all come standard. A hardtop with electronics box, full-length bolsters and Lewmar windlass are among several available options. releaseboats.com



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Opti-Angle Needle Point, chemically sharpened,
 Nor-Tempered, offset shank, extra wide bend, extra
 strong, black nickel.



38101NP-BN

KVD GRIP-PIN™ HOOK

KVD GRIP-PIN®, Opti-Angle Needle Point, chemically
 sharpened, Nor-Tempered, offset shank, extra wide
 bend, extra strong, grip-pin, black nickel.



NEW

38101W-18

WEIGHTED GRIP-PIN™ HOOK

KVD GRIP-PIN®, Weighted, Opti-Angle Needle Point,
 chemically sharpened, Nor-Tempered, offset shank,
 extra wide bend, extra strong, grip-pin, black nickel.

Photo by Adrian Gray



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ALL NEW INLINE 4-CYLINDER DOHC POWERHEAD WITH 175 CU.IN. "BIG BLOCK" DISPLACEMENT

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IMPRESSIVE ECONOMY

UP TO 19% LESS FUEL USED COMPARED TO OUR ORIGINAL V6 200

TRANSOM-FRIENDLY

LIKE ALL SUZUKI OUTBOARDS, THE DF200A/AP USES STANDARD BOLT PATTERN AND FITS 26-INCH ON CENTER

New 200 Horsepower Inline 4-Cylinder Suzuki DF200A And DF200AP Deliver V6-Like Performance In A Compact, Lightweight Outboard

If you're looking for a new outboard that delivers power, performance – and impressive fuel economy, you'll like what you see in our new DF200A and DF200AP. Our new inline 4-cylinder 200 is compact and lightweight, yet it's packed with innovative new technology. The new cowling channels cool fresh air to the intake system for improved performance. New engine sensors monitor key operating parameters to keep the

engine running smoothly, and our Lean Burn Technology delivers up to 32% less fuel used when compared to our original V6 200. DF200AP features electronic throttle and shift and new keyless starting system.

Suzuki is shining a bright light on 4-stroke outboard engine innovation. For details, see your Suzuki Marine dealer or visit www.suzukimarine.com.



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special offers
from Suzuki Marine



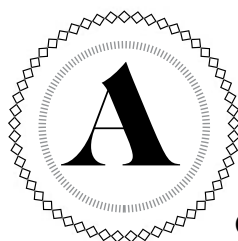
FREEDOM:
Programmable
trolling motors
mean more
fishing time.



HANDS OFF

TROLLING-MOTOR AUTOPILOTS LET YOU CONCENTRATE ON FISHING.

BY JIM HENDRICKS



A big tide swing pushed a strong current through the cuts in the Florida Keys as Capt. Robert “R.T.” Trosset used a bow-mounted 36-volt MotorGuide Xi5 trolling motor with Pinpoint GPS to bring his Yellowfin 24 Bay close to one of his favorite bridges to fish for grouper. “Are you going to anchor here?” I asked. “Sort of,” Trosset answered, activating the anchor function on the boat’s Lowrance HDS multifunction display, which was set in the Smart Steer mode and linked with the trolling motor, making the boat hold steady. Trosset had set us up for fishing the abutments without even opening the anchor locker.

As if tethered by an invisible rode, the Yellowfin 24 held its position with the bow facing into the current. The boat stayed precisely stationed until Trosset used the jog arrows on the HDS display to move the boat from side

to side to fish different abutments of the bridge in search of a willing grouper.

Practical and Productive

Virtual anchoring is just one of the practical functions afforded to saltwater anglers using GPS-guided trolling-motor autopilots, which can also automatically run an established course, take your boat to a specific waypoint, drive a predetermined pattern and more.

Minn Kota and MotorGuide offer

WIRELESS: Fobs let you control the autopilot from anywhere in the boat.



self-contained systems utilizing bow-mounted trolling motors — Minn Kota’s i-Pilot and MotorGuide’s Pinpoint GPS — operated with wireless remotes. Both also interface with multifunction displays for enhanced autopilot capabilities — the i-Pilot with a Humminbird unit via i-Pilot Link, Pinpoint GPS with a Lowrance HDS Gen2 Touch or Gen3 model via the Pinpoint GPS Gateway module (the HDS models also serve as the autopilot control panel for a properly equipped outboard-engine steering system using the Lowrance Outboard Pilot function.)

The i-Pilot system is available in a range of Minn Kota trolling motors, but only the Riptide series is designed for saltwater fishing. Pinpoint is available in the MotorGuide Xi5 trolling motor, with the SW series engineered for the brine.

Both systems free up the captain to focus more on fishing rather than maneuvering, positioning or anchoring



1

PILOT PROGRAM

1. DIRECTION:
Trolling-autopilots such as the Xi5 house guidance control in the head.

2. SETUP:
Shaft length best suits bay boats and skiffs.

3. DURABILITY:
Select a model designed especially for saltwater use.

2

3

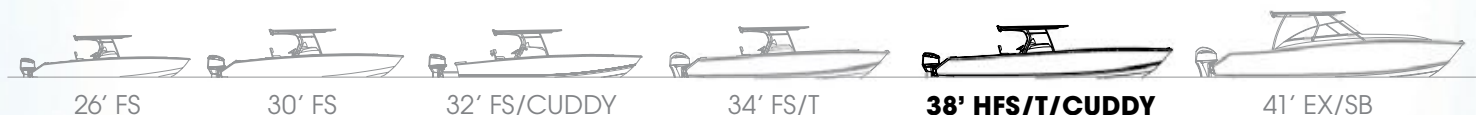


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THE RIGHT BOAT

Electric trolling motors work best on flats skiffs and bay boats with low-profile bows. Since the maximum shft length is 70 inches, finding a trolling-motor long enough to reach the water and stay there in choppy seas will be tough with an offshore boat with a high prow. To control a boat larger than 20 feet, you need a 36-volt system, which means a dedicated bank of three 31 series deep-cycle batteries.

STAY VIGILANT

In use, resist the temptation to set and forget; a blown fuse, electrical malfunction or drained batteries can leave you and your boat at the mercy of wind, waves and current. Prudent seamanship calls for vigilance, even with automatic systems.



NETWORK: All autopilot controls are available at the helm on an integrated system.

the boat. As Capt. Sam Heaton, who works with Humminbird and Minn Kota, says, "It's like having an extra crew member on board, except he doesn't get in the way."

Programmable features offer additional advantages.

On the Edge

Trolling-motor autopilots give you the ability to work along a channel drop-off, a seawall or mangrove-lined shore. Linked with the appropriate Humminbird multifunction display, the Minn Kota i-Pilot also

follows a contour line on the chart plotter using Humminbird's electronic charts. You can also re-trace a path that produced well on the first pass in the hopes it will continue to yield fish.

Last winter, Lowrance/Simrad tournament pro Mark Maus used the Pinpoint GPS and Lowrance Smart Steer autopilot function to follow a series of waypoints with the Motorguide Xi5 as we fished along a rock wall in the Florida Keys. The result was nonstop action with snapper and black grouper for well over an hour. "This is really a huge advantage," says Maus. "This keeps us right in the strike zone without me having to drive the boat."



JIM HENDRICKS

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Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill

Economic and Property Damages Settlement

The Deadline to file a Claim is June 8, 2015

June 8, 2015 has been established as the deadline to submit a claim in the Economic and Property Damages (“E&PD”) Settlement with BP Exploration & Production Inc. and BP America Production Company (“BP”) related to the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. So if you are eligible to file a claim, you must act soon.

WHO IS INCLUDED?

The E&PD Settlement Class includes people, businesses, other entities, and properties in the states of Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi, and certain counties in Texas and Florida, that were harmed by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill that occurred on April 20, 2010. The website DeepwaterHorizonSettlements.com has detailed descriptions and maps of the included geographic locations to help you determine whether you are a part of the E&PD Settlement Class. Additionally, you can call 1-866-992-6174 or e-mail questions @DeepwaterHorizonEconomicSettlement.com to find out if a geographic location is included.

WHAT ARE THE PAYMENT CATEGORIES?

The settlement provides payments if you had economic loss or property damage because of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. By submitting a claim, you can request a payment in one or more of the following seven categories:

- Economic Damage ■ Loss of Subsistence
 - Vessel Physical Damage
 - Real Property Sales Damage
- Vessels of Opportunity Charter Payment
 - Coastal Real Property Damage
 - Wetlands Real Property Damage

Economic Damage payments are available for Individuals and Entities that lost profits or earnings as a result of the Deepwater Horizon Incident. **Coastal Real Property** payments are available for property that was physically damaged in connection with the Deepwater Horizon Incident. Detailed descriptions of all seven categories are available at the website.

There is no limit on the total dollar amount of the E&PD Settlement. All qualified and timely claims will be paid in full once they are approved. The Settlement also allowed for Seafood Compensation claims, but the deadline for those claims has passed.

HOW DO I REQUEST A PAYMENT?

You must submit a Claim Form to request a payment. You can get a copy of the various Claim Forms by visiting the website or by calling 1-866-992-6174. Claims can be submitted online or by mail. If you have questions about how to file your claim, you should call the toll-free number for assistance. The claims process can be complex, so if you are eligible to file a claim, you should act now so you may complete your claim before the **June 8, 2015** deadline.

DeepwaterHorizonSettlements.com ■ 1-866-992-6174

Targeting Wrecks

Trolling-motor autopilot systems are not just for inshore fishing. Offshore and near-shore anglers also find plenty of applications, such as when fishing wrecks. “I use it for anchoring when I fish permit on wrecks off Key West,” says Trosset. “Once we eyeball the school, I use the jog function to put the boat in position for a cast.”

You can also use these systems in conjunction with an appropriate multifunction display to automatically drive a slow circular pattern around a wreck, a rock pile, moored buoys or an oil rig while casting to the structure for fish such as amberjack, cobia, snapper, or tuna.

Slow-Troll

Trolling-motor systems also allow you to slow-troll on a set course for a considerably more stealthy approach than using the main engine. It has paid off for me while slow-trolling live baits for thresher sharks off the coast of Southern California. We just set a trolling pattern on the multifunction display

that boxed in a zone teeming with bait, a strategy that produced a 200-pound thresher.

The same technique could be used, for instance, while slow-trolling live baits along a weed line for dolphin offshore; around a jetty for striped bass; over a nearshore wreck for king mackerel or along a kelp bed

for white seabass.

Whether you fish from a bay boat or a flats skiff, you will be impressed with the wide range of utility and advantage offered by a trolling-motor autopilot system. It's the electronic equivalent of an extra set of hands — a virtual crew member to drive the boat while you're busy catching fish. 🐟



TROLLING-MOTOR AUTOPILOT SYSTEMS

MOTOR	SYSTEM	RETAIL	COMPATIBLE MFDS
Minn Kota Riptide	i-Pilot	Starting at \$1,199.99	Humminbird Onix, 1100, 900, 800, 700 series
Motorguide SW series	Xi5 Pinpoint GPS	Starting at \$1,459.99	Lowrance HDS Gen2 Touch, Gen3 series

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Quality, reliability, technology and fuel-efficiency have made Honda an automotive legend. You'll find those same strengths in every Honda Marine outboard. Honda outboards deliver best-of-class features in models ranging from 2.3 to 250 hp. Many even share engine technology and components used in Honda vehicles like the Accord, Odyssey, Fit and Pilot — vehicles that have proven themselves over millions of miles. No wonder all Honda outboards are backed by the only 5-year manufacturer's warranty in the industry. Power your boat with the brand that offers millions of miles of proven performance — Honda Marine.



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1

GET REAL

Garmin's new Panoptix sonar shows what's around your boat in real time, thanks to a multibeam, phased-array transducer and a continually refreshing display. Options with Panoptix Forward or Panoptix Down transducer include LiveVu Forward; RealVu 3D for a 3-D model of the bottom; LiveVu Down, RealVu 3D Historical or RealVu Down. \$1,499.99; garmin.com

2

LIGHT 'EM UP

Ocean Scout handheld thermal imagers from FLIR offer the power to see boats, buoys, debris and human targets up to 600 yards away in total darkness. Available in 240-by-180 resolution and 320-by-240 resolution, the 320 features extended range and video output for multi-function display viewing across popular platforms. \$1,999, \$2,999; flir.com

3

REZ DISPENSER

Furuno's NavNet TZtouch2 produces CHIRP-like sonar images four to eight times sharper than conventional fish finders, thanks to a 56-channel GPS receiver and dual-frequency fish finder with RezBoost, with the 50/200 kHz transducer you already have. Available in 12.1- and 15.6-inch displays, both NMEA 2000 compatible. \$3,995, \$5,995; furunousa.com

The **222 Sportfish** with its tournament inspired 32 gallon live well, 96 gallon fuel capacity, twin insulated fish boxes, and fully bolstered cockpit with tow rails, is one magnificent fishing machine! With options like, underwater LED lighting, under gunwale LED lighting, raw water washdown, custom fiberglass hardtop and clean, open deck configuration allows for flexibility and roominess that many boats in its class simply cannot offer. So it can be as serious as you are about your passion!



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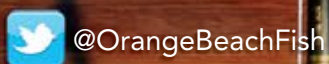
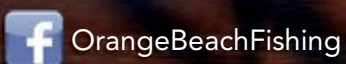
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MY BOAT

JOHNATHAN KING,
MURFREESBORO, TENNESSEE

I live near Nashville, Tennessee, but I regularly trailer my Shearwater 23 down to Destin, Florida, and sometimes to South Carolina, Alabama and Louisiana. The word that best describes my boat is versatility. The front deck is roomy enough for two anglers, and there's enough seating and cockpit space for my family. The hull design lets me fish flats and bays, and also run offshore when it's not too rough. Thanks to the 81-gallon fuel tank, I have plenty of range. There's a Power-Pole to stake out for inshore fish and 95 gallons of livewell space for enough bait to fish and chum. A total of 24 rod holders let me bring a selection of outfits to tackle anything inshore and offshore. Aside from the shade it provides, the T-top holds an electronics box with a second GPS and VHF radio, and the crow's-nest above is invaluable when searching for cobia. Lastly, the trim tabs and hydraulic jack plate enable my Shearwater to run shallow, if needed, and come off plane is just 30 inches of water. 🐟

WIN
THIS
KIT!

SHOW OFF YOUR BOAT!

From initial setup to modifications, show us how you've customized your boat to make it your ideal fishing machine. Send a short description and a hi-res image to: yourboat@saltwatersportsman.com. If we choose your boat, we'll send you a Star brite boat care kit: five products, a wash mitt and a bucket to keep your boat in top shape.



GET A HANDLE ON YOUR GEAR

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This versatile tackle case features a deep storage bin with adjustable compartments on one side and attaches two 3600 StowAway® Utility Boxes on the other. It allows you to quickly customize it for every outing, taking only the tackle you need.



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Awarded... Best in Show, Miami International Boat Show, February 2015

Awarded... Mil-Tough Rating, Structural Composites, February 2015

53' Sueños features Advanced Combat Craft Construction. The US Navy has spent two million dollars developing this unique building technique. HydraSports Custom is the only recreational vessel utilizing this specific technology. This technology was developed by Structural Composites and has won numerous awards including three Congressional Medals of Merit.

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To learn more visit, www.hydrasports.com/5300suenos.aspx

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CUSTOM



ENDGAME///

With the battle nearly won, coordinated teamwork between angler and wire man becomes critical. Capt. Mike Lemon and crew aboard the *Revenge* tagged and released this blue marlin off the North Drop in the U.S. Virgin Islands during the USVI Open Atlantic Blue Marlin Tournament, commonly know as the “Boy Scout” Tournament.

/// PHOTO BY RICHARD GIBSON



**FIND THE
HOT BITE
THIS MONTH**

**IN THE TRAVELING
FISHERMAN PAGE 98**

PLANNER

WHAT: Tarpon

WHEN: April through July,
best in May and June

WHERE: Florida's Atlantic
and Gulf coasts

WHO: Boating anglers
with flats skiffs, bay boats or
small center consoles. The
following guides can shorten
the road to success:

Capt. Andy Thompson

Biscayne Bay, Everglades
and upper Keys
786-473-3185
skiffguide1@yahoo.com

**Capt. Bryan
"Bear" Holeman**

Middle and lower Keys
727-452-6917
bryan@holemanbrothers
.com

Capt. Al Keller

Ten Thousand Islands and
Apalachicola area
770-855-5785
fishalkeller@earthlink.net

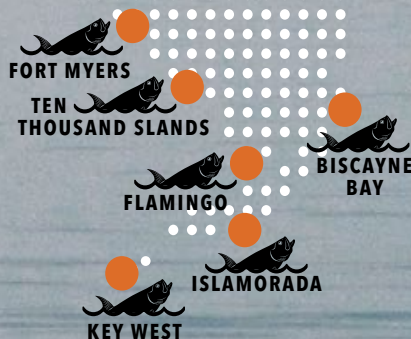
Capt. Kevin Holley

Gulf beaches, Boca Grande,
Pine Island Sound
239-872-0833
captkevinholley@aol.com

ON THE MOVE:

Every spring,
thousands of
tarpon begin
their migration
along both
Florida coasts.





FLORIDA SILVER RUSH

TOP TARPON GUIDES
SOLVE THE SPRING
MIGRATION RIDDLE.

BY ALEX SUESCUN///



If you've felt the adrenaline rush and the sense of accomplishment derived from even modest success with tarpon, you know the fabled "silver king" is in a class all its own. This month, droves of this challenging game fish are already on the move along both coasts of the Sunshine State, and four tarpon pros help you tap into the annual migration and turn near misses and sporadic action into consistent triumphs.



Pro Tip #1

"Don't be afraid to scale down the leader and the fly or lure if you are not getting bites. Sometimes you even have to go with longer leaders and sparsely tied flies."

Capt. Andy Thompson

Backdrop Miami

With downtown Miami a scant 15 miles away, Capt. Andy Thompson often targets tarpon in the southeastern reaches of Biscayne Bay. The first few weeks of the migration, beginning in mid-April, he concentrates his efforts on oceanside flats from the Ragged Keys south to Angelfish Creek, where he gets shots at fish that haven't yet been run over by unsuspecting boaters or bombarded with lures and flies from countless other anglers.

Later on, he heads down to the upper Keys, where aside from intercepting fish traveling oceanside, Thompson has the option to venture into the backcountry and fish Florida Bay and the Everglades.

Upper Keys Front and Back

"If it's a calm morning, I head to the backcountry," he explains. "But if the wind blows, the ocean flats are the best bet. In the back, laid-up tarpon are hard to see when it's windy. But ocean fish still move then, and the lighter bottom makes them easier to spot." Thompson adds that, while tarpon cruising along Atlantic-side shallows are generally tougher to fool, they often bite best when the water is a bit murky as result of the wind.

Thompson prefers to

THOMPSON'S PRO TACKLE BOX

FLY TACKLE: 11- and 12-weight outfits, Airflo Ridge Tarpon fly lines, DIY leaders with 40- to 60-pound fluorocarbon shock tippet

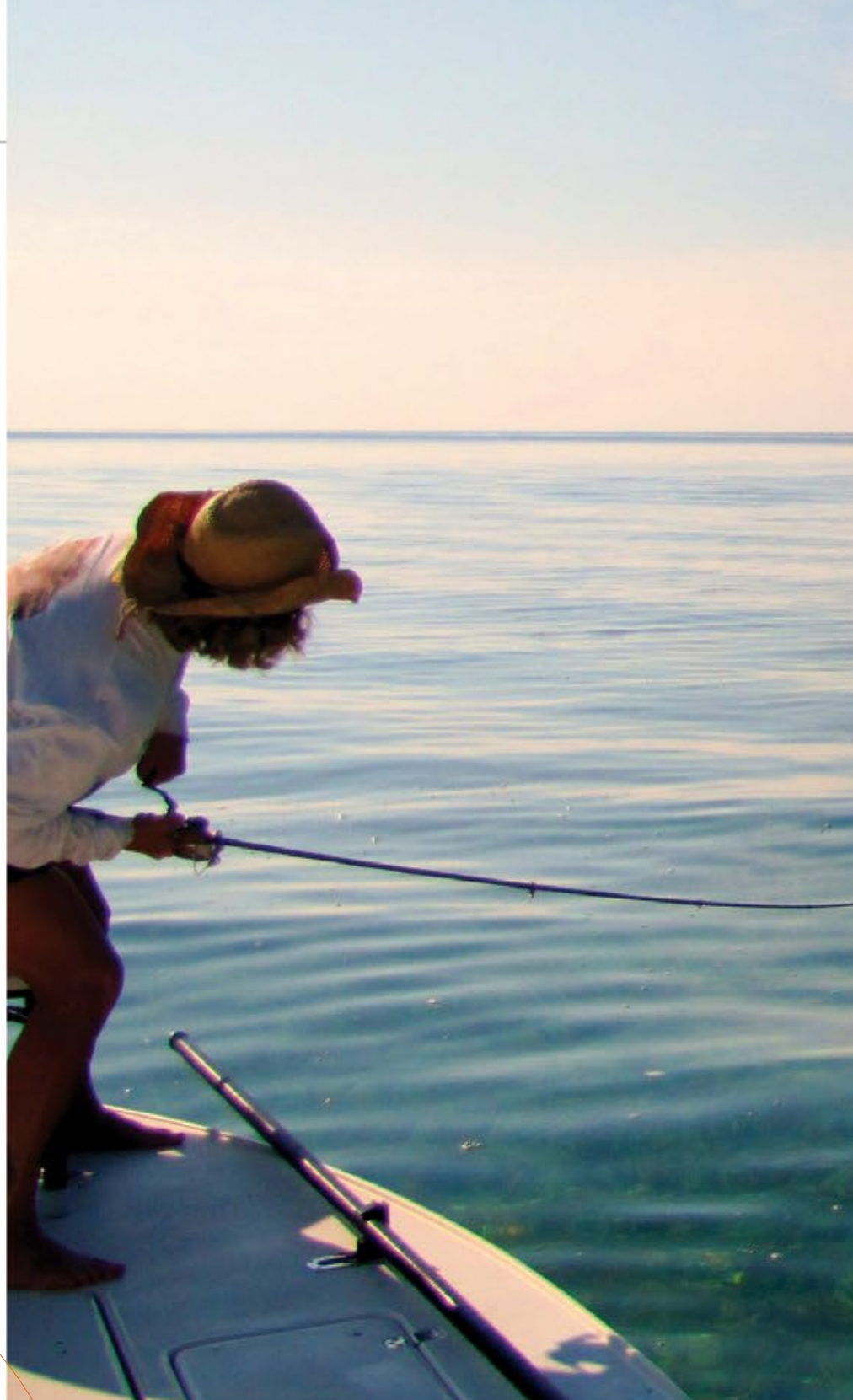
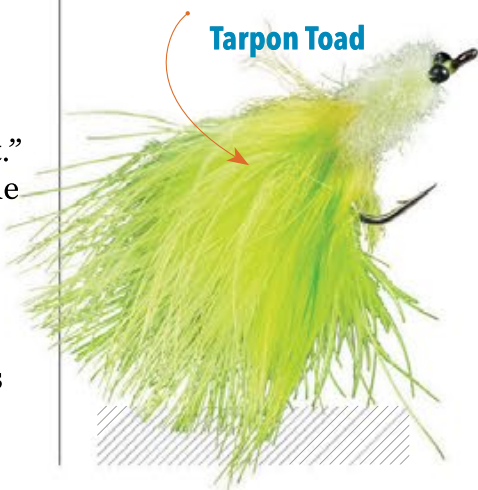
SPINNING TACKLE: Medium-heavy 7-foot rods, Quantum Smoke 50 reels, 30-pound braid, 50-pound fluorocarbon leaders

BAITS: Shrimp on a jig head or free-lined for night fishing inlets, Keys bridges and channels

LURES: MirrOlure 77 series in chartreuse-and-gold and green-and-gold; Hopy Lures original series, 7- and 10-inch, in bone, black and bubble gum; DOA Airheads in various colors

FLIES: Oceanside, worm patterns on size 1 and 1/0 hooks. For the backcountry, Tarpon Toads and EP Tarpon Streamers in chartreuse, purple-and-black; and rust-and-brown on 2/0 hooks

Tarpon Toad



MirrOlure 77 Series



pole in 4 to 5 feet of water, but in deep bays and channels with a strong current where tarpon sometimes congregate in the backcountry, poling is often not an option. So Thompson put a Minn Kota iPilot in the front of his skiff, an addition the guide claims has proven invaluable. "Now, in deep water, I can get ahead of rolling fish, turn the boat as needed, or stay put

despite wind and current."

When asked about the most common mistake tarpon anglers make, Thompson replied that many tend to hurry and cast too soon. "And most just cast ahead of an incoming school and hope for the best, instead of targeting an individual fish within the school and working the fly or lure based on its reactions."



BOW TO THE KING:

A tarpon's acrobatics can be mesmerizing, but don't forget to point the rod at the fish when it jumps.

CRAB MEAL:

A live silver dollar-size crab under a float or free-lined in the current is effective in the passes and the channels, right.



Pro Tip # 2

"Always keep track of where your lure or fly is in relation to the targeted fish, and do whatever is necessary to keep it in front and within the strike zone."

Capt. Bryan "Bear" Holeman

Lower Keys Basin

Capt. Bryan "Bear" Holeman from Key West, Florida, targets tarpon from Marathon down to the Marquesas Keys, but he counts the basins on the Gulf side of the lower Keys among his favorite places to tangle with the silver king. "Big tarpon start trickling in as early as February, and some huge laid-up fish can be found there throughout the season," he explains.

Holeman sometimes uses a trolling motor to chase schools or keep his boat

put at a specific ambush point, but he'd rather pole parallel to channels or slight depressions, as well as along edges where grass meets sand, especially near points and shallow bars that funnel tarpon down a predictable path.

Blow and Flow

Holeman prefers sunny days with a slight wind in the backcountry. And he finds the best action in the lower Keys often comes after a strong south wind. "Once the wind dies, the

HOLEMAN'S PRO TACKLE BOX

FLY TACKLE: 11-weight outfits, Airflo Ridge Tarpon and RIO Tarpon Technical fly lines, DIY leaders with 40- to 60-pound fluoro shock tippet

SPINNING TACKLE: Medium-heavy 6½- and 7-foot rods, Shimano Stradic 8000 reels, 30-pound braid, 50-pound fluorocarbon leaders

BAITS: Live crabs 2 to 3 feet below a small natural cork float; free-lined pilchards. Both on 2/0 live-bait hooks, sometimes keel-weighted hooks to keep a crab under the float at a precise depth

LURES: Hogy Lures original series 10-inch in bubble gum; 6-inch Gulp! Saltwater Jerk Shad in nuclear chicken rigged with heavy-duty worm-style hook

Gulp!
Jerk Shad



Chili Pepper
Worm

FLIES: Worm and shrimp flies, Tarpon Bunnies and various fly patterns with marabou tails to tease the fish

water stays cloudy. Then the tarpon are easier to approach, and they usually eat better," he says.

While many anglers favor the big ebbs and floods that occur around the new and full moons, Holeman is particularly fond of a spring rising tide right after a negative low. He says then, aside from benefiting from the strong tidal flow, murky water conditions similar to those after a prolonged southerly blow improve the tarpon bite considerably.



Don't Give Up

The ideal presentation allows a tarpon to focus on your fly or lure with both eyes, meaning that the artificial remains directly in front of the fish as it approaches. But Holeman believes many anglers tend to give up on a fish and quit stripping or reeling too soon. He's also convinced that even experienced tarpon anglers often attempt to set the hook too early. He clarifies that you should always keep stripping or reeling until you feel some weight; that way, the hook finds a spot to lodge during the hook-set.



Pro Tip # 3

"When fishing deep bays and channels, or in stained water, always work the lure or fly all the way to the boat. A tarpon could be tracking it, and the fish will lose interest if you stop or slow down the retrieve."

Capt. Al Keller

Western Front

Capt. Al Keller chooses the west coast of Florida for his tarpon pursuits. He spends April and May tracking them in the Ten Thousand Islands, near Marco Island, before moving up to Carrabelle to target fish in and around Apalachicola Bay in June and July.

Dotted with secluded flats, protected coves and brackish bays alive with baitfish and crustaceans, Ten Thousand Islands is where migrating tarpon temporarily mingle with resident fish as they seek forage and a rest stop before continuing their journey. Once the water temperature reaches 74 degrees, Keller begins his search here.

Hide and Seek

"I concentrate on bays with deep creeks in them or nearby that provide the water flow and food supply to hold tarpon," says Keller. With dark bottom and tannic water often prevalent, the veteran guide relies on spotting fish waking, finning, rolling or busting bait.

A light wind is ideal, but he says clear, sunny skies are not as critical. As in other areas, spring tides provide a major boost, and Keller believes a low tide between 9:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m., three to four days after a new or full moon, typically signals a peak feeding period.

KELLER'S PRO TACKLE BOX

FLY TACKLE: 11- and 12-weight outfits, RIO Tropical Outbound Short series floating and sink-tip fly lines, DIY leaders with 60- to 80-pound fluorocarbon shock tippet

SPINNING TACKLE: Medium-heavy 7½-foot rods, Shimano Stradic 5000 reels, 30-pound braid, 60-pound fluorocarbon leaders

BAIT-CASTING TACKLE: Medium-heavy 7½-foot rods, Shimano Curado 300 reels, 30-pound braid, 60-pound fluorocarbon leaders

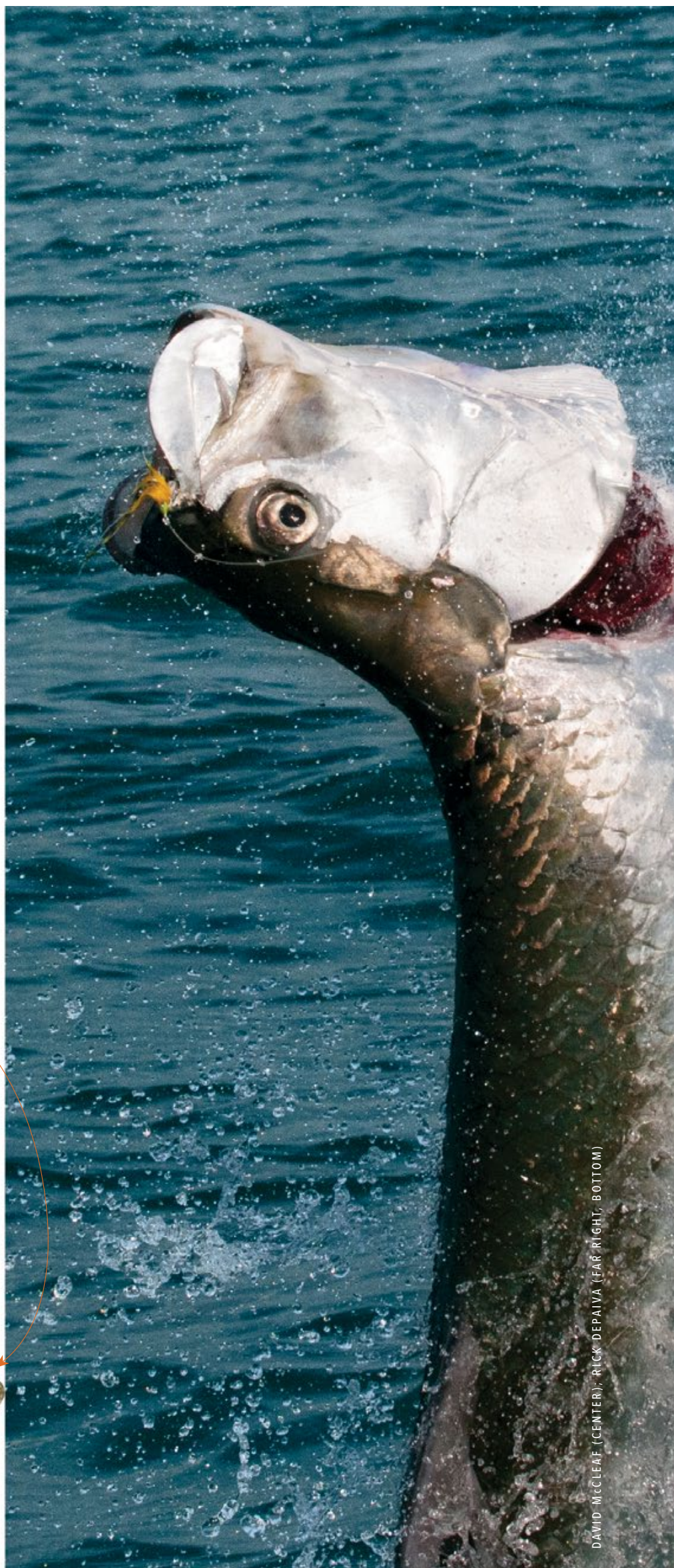
LURES: Bomber Saltwater Grade Long A plugs in black-and-silver and chartreuse-and-silver, DOA Bait Buster in similar colors, with 4x strong hooks

FLIES: EP Tarpon SP Everglades and Peanut Butter in slate-and-olive; and black-and-purple, on 2/0 hooks

EP Tarpon SP Everglades



DOA Bait Buster



DAVID MCCLEAF (CENTER); RICK DEPAIVA (FAR RIGHT, BOTTOM)



Pro Tip # 4

"Be sure to always apply side pressure and keep changing rod angles to tire a fish quickly."

Capt. Kevin Holley

HOLLEY'S PRO TACKLE BOX

FLYTACKLE: 10- and 12-weight outfits, floating fly lines, DIY leaders with 50- to 80-pound fluorocarbon shock tippet

SPINNING: Medium-heavy 8-foot rods, Quantum Cabo 60 reels, 50-pound braid; leaders of 4 to 5 feet of 50-pound mono tied to 1½ to 2 feet of 80-pound fluorocarbon

BAITS: Free-lined live threadfin herring and crabs (sometimes suspended 3 to 5 feet below a float in depths under 15 feet). Gamakatsu Octopus circle hooks – 6/0 for herring, 4/0 or smaller for crabs

LURES: 10-inch Hogy Lures original series in dark patterns in the morning; lighter or brighter ones later in the day

Hogy Lure

Black-Purple
Tarpon
Streamer

FLIES: Black-and-purple split-wing tarpon streamers on 3/0 hooks



Hot Corner

Strategically located where the Florida Panhandle and the Big Bend meet, Apalachicola Bay and its neighboring Gulf waters offer reliable tarpon action until an extended period of severe weather hits in late July or early August.

Points, sand bars and edges are likely tarpon thoroughfares around Apalachicola, but Keller deems the presence of bait pods, especially menhaden, is often crucial to pinpointing the fish. Though he targets them mostly in clear water and over light, sand bottom, tarpon around these parts are far from timid when striking a lure or fly. Keller says it's not uncommon for a fish to aggressively follow and strike at boat-side.

Live-Bait Central

While flies and lures take tarpon in southwest Florida, live-baiting is overwhelmingly more popular. Capt. Kevin Holley has pursued the silver leviathans from Boca Grande Pass south to

Fort Myers Beach for many years, and he favors free-lining threadfin herring, but sometimes he opts for crabs, especially after a "hill tide" (very high spring tide), when tarpon gather in the passes to feast on multitudes of crabs pushed by the strong outgoing flow.

Out in the Gulf, tides don't matter, and ambush points are based on the depth – 12 to 28 feet – rather than bottom topography. Water movement, bait aggregations and signs of tarpon are what Holley looks for. When he locates a school, he keeps up with his trolling motor, and he lets his GPS tracking register the path tarpon follow.

Sound Advice

The last two weeks in May, Holley often looks for fish in Pine Island Sound, particularly when strong winds make conditions difficult in open water. In June, he concentrates on Johnson Shoals and other spots near Boca Grande. In late June and July, he targets fish in north Charlotte Harbor.

Holley also fishes around shrimp boats anchored as far as 10 miles out, but he catches most tarpon along the beaches. "Off Sanibel Island, I fish from ¼ mile to 2 miles from shore. Off Captiva, where it's deeper, tarpon travel closer to the beach, from just a few yards to a couple of hundred yards out," explains the guide. 🐟





PLANNER

WHAT: Trophy spotted seatrout

WHEN: Year-round

WHERE: East Coast of Florida to Texas Gulf Coast

WHO: DIY boating and wading anglers can target large seatrout successfully, but a boat permits fishing in productive areas that can't be reached on foot. Local knowledge is key, and the following guides expedite the learning process:

Capt. Patric Garmeson
Daphne, Alabama
251-747-1554
pgarmeson@gmail.com

Capt. Adam Jaynes
Sabine Lake,
Louisiana-Texas border
409-988-3901
amjaynes@gmail.com

GAME'S AFOOT:

Wading is a great way to sneak up on trophy trout in clear, shallow water.



BOB MCNALLY (2: CENTER, TOP LEFT)



**TOURNEY PRO
EDDIE CABLER**



**CAPT.
ADAM JAYNES**



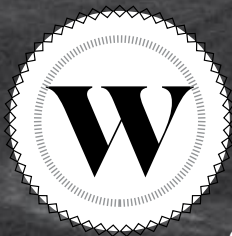
**CAPT.
PATRIC GARMESON**



THE TROUT SPECIALISTS

**PRO INSIGHTS
FOR BIG SEATROUT
FROM EAST TO WEST.**

/// BY BOB MCNALLY



While it's possible to luck into a bragging-size trout now and then, catching trophies consistently takes skill and a thorough knowledge of the fish's habits and habitats. Three inshore experts who tally numerous heavyweights every year detail the secrets to their ongoing success with hefty spotted seatrout from Florida to Texas.



FISHY COUNTERFEIT: Oversize trout preying on mullet and other baitfish often fall for imitations.

Go Big for Pigs

Many trout fishermen are jig casters, but when big trout are the target, Eddie Cabler, trout tournament top gun from Jacksonville, Florida, loves plugs. He's lost count of the trout weighing over 6 pounds he's caught. But he remembers landing three over 10 pounds, including a

32-inch behemoth that hit the 12-pound mark on the scale. He favors MirrOlures in natural color schemes that best imitate baitfish native to northeast Florida.

Winter Slowdown

In cold water, baitfish schools often go deep and the trout that prey on them follow

suit. In addition, trout are not nearly as active when temperatures drop, says Cabler, so anglers must adjust their tactics accordingly. He advises to switch to sinking plugs and work them slowly. And use lots of pauses during the retrieve because most trout hit a lure just as it starts to move. "Sometimes fishing this way can be boring, but it's deadly on big fish," he says.

In water cooler than 65 degrees, Cabler goes to twitch baits that have very little inherent action, and he insists those with rattles are more effective. He prefers the TTR and 52M series MirrOlures, again, in natural

colors. Considering a 1-foot-per-second sink rate, Cabler uses the countdown method to estimate when his lure has reached the desired depth. And sometimes he'll add stick-on weights to help a plug sink quicker.

Stay Tight for Big Bites

Using his depth finder to locate bait schools and likely trout ambush spots, Cabler often works water 8 to 12 feet deep, targeting drop-offs and ledges. "I want my plugs tight to a drop-off," he says. "Use your depth finder to keep the boat near a ledge or rocky drop-off and make long casts parallel to it. Casting perpendicular to that ledge or drop-off is not as productive because your lure doesn't stay long in the zone where big trout are holding." He adds that, "if you find bait schools in deep water, work plugs around those areas and your big trout catches will improve."

CABLER'S PRO TACKLE BOX

RODS: Quantum Smoke 6½-foot to 6-foot 9-inch medium-light action spinning and Abu Garcia 6½-foot medium-heavy bait-casting

REELS: Shimano Sustain 1000 for spinning and Abu Garcia REVO Rocket for bait-casting

LINE: PowerPro, 8-pound for spinning and 10-pound for bait-casting

LEADER: 2 feet of 12-pound fluorocarbon for spinning and 14-pound for bait-casting

MirrOlure MirrOdine XL



Pro Tip #1

"Once trout get pretty good size – 4 pounds or more – they feed primarily on mullet, pinfish, menhaden and other finfish. So for big trout, I want bigger lures, and plugs definitely work best for me."

Eddie Cabler





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Pro Tip # 2

"When water temperatures reach about 70 degrees – which is about May in south Alabama – I find trout on shallower flats of sand mixed with oyster shell. But it's got to be pretty salty; that's an important key when water starts warming up."

Capt. Patric Garmeson

Hands-Off Hookups

As a charter captain in Daphne, Alabama, Capt. Patric Garmeson has learned that a hands-off approach he calls "do-nothing" fishing often produces the biggest seatrout. "We rig rods with H&H 3/8- to 1/2-ounce Sparkle Beetle jigs and make controlled drifts with an electric motor over likely areas." Garmeson also shared that the rods are left in gunnel holders – not held by anglers – and no hook-set is made. The jigs are left to bump along the bottom, and when a trout takes, the rod just bows and the angler picks up the rod to fight the fish. "We just slide along with the current, allowing the lures to bump bottom freely and the trout to take lures unimpeded. It's a very natural lure presentation." For this technique, Garmeson employs three to five jigs of varying colors, and he prefers outgoing tides

running at 1 to 2 knots.

Saline Solution

Sometimes in spring and summer, abundant rain pushes bait and trout well down river mouths and out into the Gulf of Mexico, forcing anglers to keep moving to locate fish. "Saline content diminishes, and fish move to find the right mix of salt and fresh water," he says. "Then it's best to work stretches about 300 yards long. If nothing hits, try a different spot."

Electronic Surveillance

Garmeson believes locating bait schools is essential to pinpointing big trout. Surface swirls or dimpling at the surface can lead to pods of mullet or menhaden, with trout nearby, but a sensitive sonar helps locate deeper bait schools. "I use a Lowrance HDS-7 color unit,"



BUMPIN' LONG: A Sparkle Beetle jig left to bounce freely entices hefty trout.

he says. "It's very helpful in locating bait pods, and, with a little experience, it's easy to see individual big trout."

"Pinfish, croakers, white trout, mullet, menhaden, shad and shrimp show well on sonar at middepths. Big trout usually are on the bottom, relating to the bait." According to Garmeson, live shrimp and jigs produce

well near the bait pods, and, at times, he opts for plugs such as a 1/2-ounce gold-and-black Rat-L-Trap or a MirrOdine XL.

GARMESON'S PRO TACKLE BOX

RODS: Wright & McGill 7-foot medium-action spinning

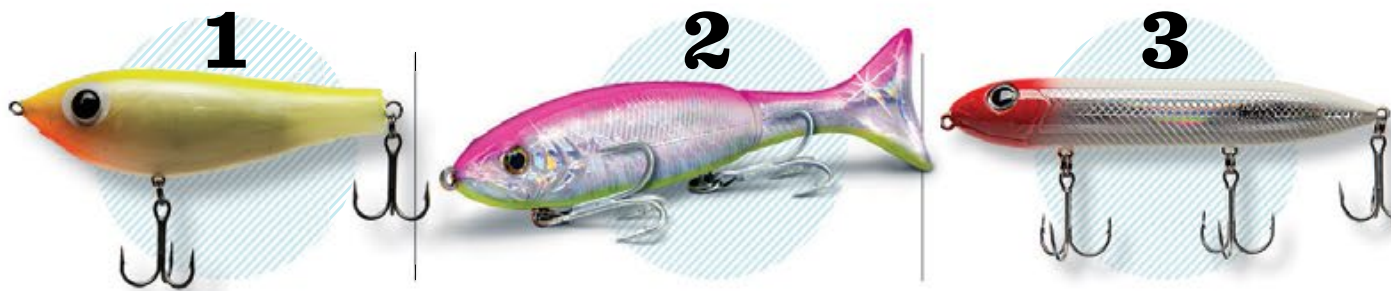
REELS: Shimano Sedona or Sahara spinning

LINE: PowerPro, 20 pound

LEADER: 4 to 8 feet of 20-pound fluorocarbon



ALL-PRO ARSENAL



THESE LURES FOOL BIG SEATROUT IN A VARIETY OF LOCALES AND SITUATIONS:

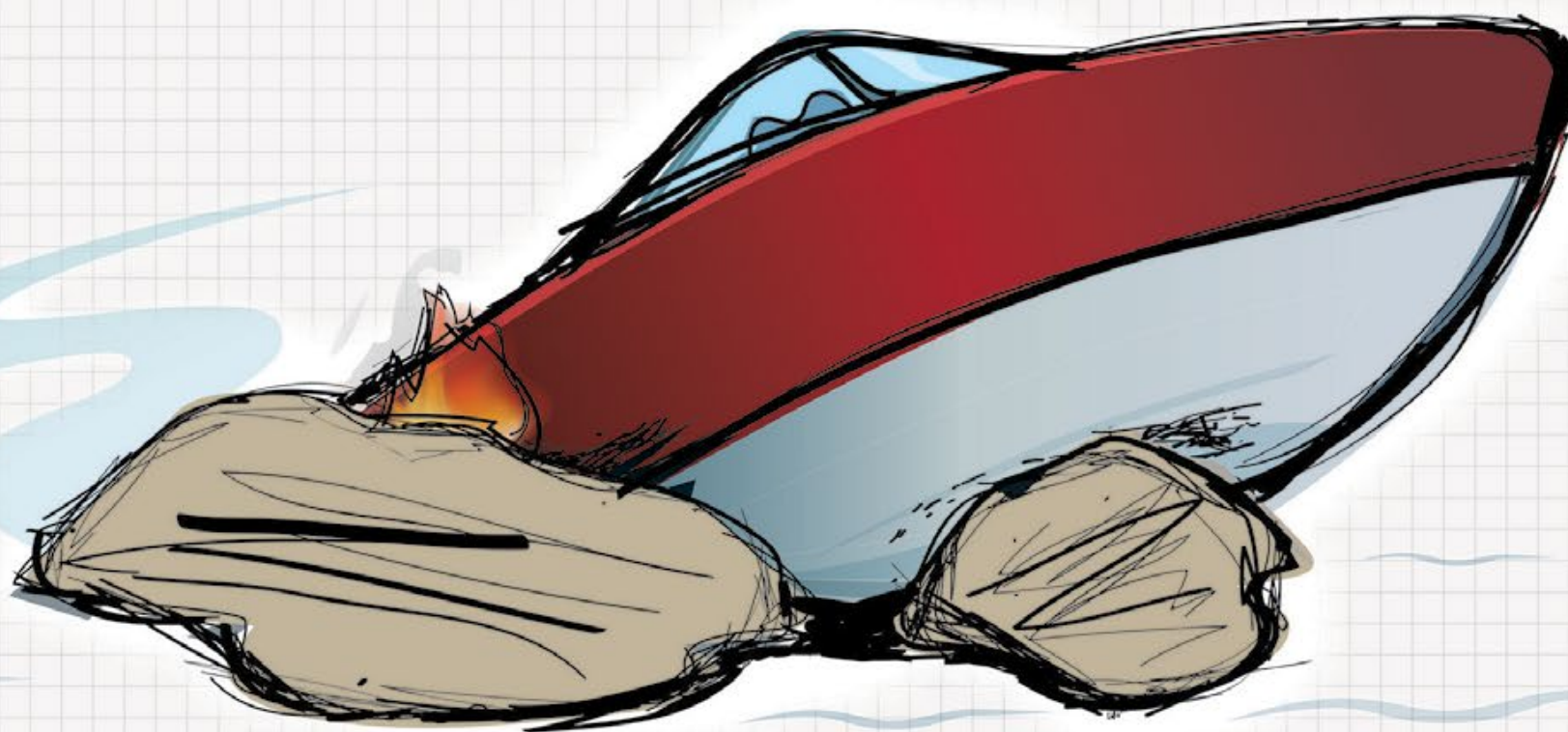
MirrOlure TTR, 52M series and MirrOdine XL in black, green or blue backs with silver sides; Paul Brown's Fat Boy in pearl-and-chartreuse, or pink-and-silver, **1**; H&H 3/8- to 1/2-ounce Sparkle Beetle jigs in chartreuse, white or root beer; Saltwater Rat-L-Trap 1/2-ounce gold-and-black; Egret 5-inch Wedgetail mullet in limeaid or white diamond; Kick A Mullet Jr. in pink-flash-chartreuse, **2**, redhead flash or black-back flash; Heddon Saltwater Super Spook in redhead, **3**, clown or pink-and-gold.



WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW CAN COST YOU

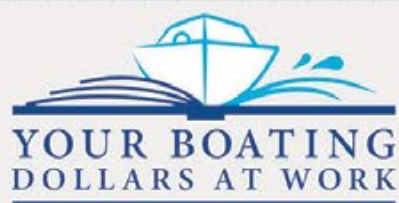
new propeller: \$350
towing service: \$500
gearcase replacement: \$5,000
hull repair: \$12,000

> **\$17,850**



> **\$35** cost for boater safety course that
could have prevented this accident

80% of boating deaths occurred on boats where the
operator had not received boating safety instruction.

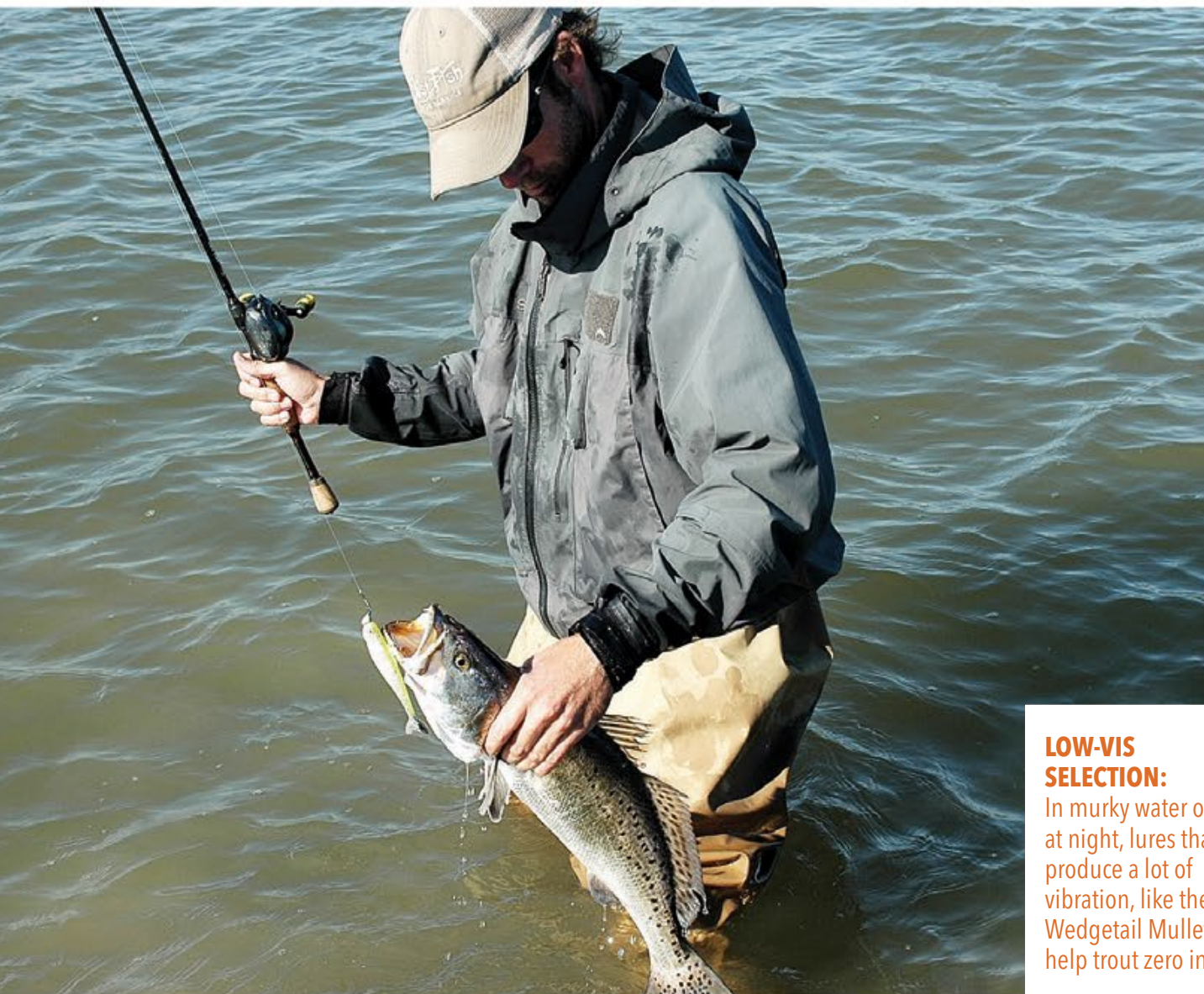


Produced under a grant from the Sport Fish Restoration and
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Education Prevents Accidents.
Take A Boating Safety Course.

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LOW-VIS SELECTION:
In murky water or at night, lures that produce a lot of vibration, like the Wedgetail Mullet, help trout zero in.

Get Wet for Trophies

Capt. Adam Jaynes, inshore guide on tidal Sabine Lake in the Texas-Louisiana border, turns to wading during windy spring weather, when big seatrout are in skinny, clear water, to take hull slap and other likely boat noises out of the equation. “Big trout on Sabine are shallow in spring and are very skittish about noise, so wading is the best way to go,” he says. “Also, in a boat, it’s easy to drift over fish and spook them.”

Jaynes prefers the clear, salty water pushed in by incoming tides, and he works areas from knee- to waist-deep. “Wading in water in the high 60s to low 70s isn’t uncomfortable, and we catch many more fish of 4 to 8 pounds. I anchor my boat 100 yards from where I want to fish, and I concentrate on mud lumps, grass clumps and shell beds with lots of bait.” Jaynes also relayed that he and his clients wade with the wind at their backs, so it’s easy to make long casts and lower

the odds of spooking trout.

When wading for spring mega trout, he selects one of three choices: an Egret 4-inch Kick A Mullet Jr. fished with a steady retrieve just below the surface, or with a twitch-twitch-pause action; a Heddon Super Spook worked with a constant walk-the-dog retrieve; a Paul Brown’s Fat Boy fished with a walk-the-dog action, or a twitch-twitch-pause.

Night Moves

In summer, catching seatrout at night is a common tactic, but Jaynes targets 3- to 6-pounders, which he claims act differently than smaller trout. “I don’t fish near lights,” he says. “Lights attract bait and trout, but most fish are on the small side. Instead, I wade flats around spoil islands adjacent to the 35-foot deep Intracoastal

JAYNE’S PRO TACKLE BOX

RODS: Sarge Freebird 6-foot 5-inch custom medium-action bait-casting

REELS: Lew’s BB1 Inshore Speed Spool bait-casting

LINE: Fins Windtamer braid, 30 pound

LEADER: 4 to 5 feet of 20- to 30-pound Berkley Big Game mono

Waterway. After the sun sets, heavy trout come out of that deep water to feed up on the shallows during moving tide phases.”

For night duty, Jaynes has two favorites: an Egret 5-inch Wedgetail Mullet fished on a 1/8-ounce jig head with a steady retrieve, and a Heddon Super Spook fished slowly, with lots of pauses to help big trout catch up to it.

Bird-Watching

Jaynes believes the easiest and best fishing for trout in the 3- to 6-pound range takes place in autumn. “That’s when shrimp pour out of tidal marsh creeks into Sabine Lake and big trout and redfish hammer them. Fish are under birds, and we slam them with small, brightly colored Egret 3 1/2-inch Wedgetails on 1/8- to 1/4-ounce jig heads.”

Jaynes adds that, under birds, trout often are small, so it’s wise to keep moving, fishing different flocks of birds and bait schools to locate the big ones, usually in open water 6 to 7 feet deep. “Sometimes surface foam under birds indicates bigger trout feeding below the surface, and it’s not uncommon for heavy redfish to be in the mix.”

Pro Tip # 3

“Wedgetails have a big vibrating tail that turns trout on. The small grubs fished on jigs imitate shrimp well. And since we catch a lot of fish, I like the single hook because it makes unhooking and releasing them easier.”

Capt. Adam Jaynes





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TUNED UP:

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RIC BURNLEY (CENTER)



PRO TUNA TACTICS

FOUR REGIONAL EXPERTS TAKE
TUNA FISHING TO THE NEXT LEVEL.

/// BY RIC BURNLEY

1



**CAPT.
JACK SPRENGEL**
Narragansett Bay,
Rhode Island

2



**CAPT.
KEVIN BEACH**
Venice, Louisiana

3

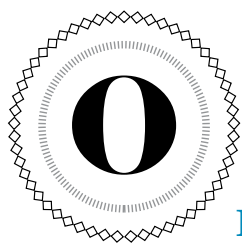


**CAPT.
JAMIE THINNES**
San Diego,
California

4



**CAPT.
DICK HARRIS**
Oregon Inlet,
North Carolina



On Tuesday morning, the boat ramp is quiet, the parking lot empty. Tuesday night, a charter skipper posts a photo on Facebook of a limit of tuna on the dock.

Come Wednesday, the ramp is full of boats, the parking lot stacked with trailers and frantic anglers scurry in the pre-dawn dark. Nothing gets offshore anglers more excited than the mention of tuna. From the Northeast to the West Coast, tuna pros dig into a deep bag of tricks to fool these sharp-eyed, hard-pulling and delicious predators.



Pro Tip #1

"Most people work a jig as fast as possible, but sometimes the fish want a slow approach, even a dead-stick."

REAL WICKED TUNA

From his home base in Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island, Capt. Jack Sprengel at East Coast Charters (eastcoastchartersri.com) targets tuna from early summer to late fall.

Inshore, he chases bluefins with topwater lures and soft-plastic jigs. "The fish seem to swim into the wind, so I like a west wind to bring them inshore," Sprengel says, adding that bluefin tuna like a chop and 10- to 15-knot wind.

Offshore, the best action is in the canyons and along deepwater drops. "I head for the northwest corner of a warm-water eddy that crosses some type of underwater structure," Sprengel explains. "Even a 2-degree temperature difference can hold fish." He also likes clear water and looks for low chlorophyll counts on satellite images.

In late summer, Sprengel turns his attention to the night bite. He trolls spreader bars, swimming plugs and skirted baits until an hour

after sunset. Once night falls, Sprengel puts out the Hydro Glow light and bait rigs. He stresses thawing butterfish completely. "Frozen chunks float and attract sharks," he says.

He drifts three baits, one just inside the light, one halfway between the light and the thermocline, and another at the thermocline. "I adjust the gain on my fish finder to pick up the thermocline," he says.

Sprengel also jigs with vertical jigs and soft plastics. He'll drift all night, then turn to trolling from an hour before dawn until late morning. "I've fished without a bite for eight hours for two hours of action," Sprengel claims. "The key is to have your act together, fish where the life is, and be ready for anything."

SPRENGEL'S PRO TACKLE BOX

TROLLING: Medium-heavy stand-up outfits spooled with 100-pound braid. Add 30 feet of 200-pound mono leader to a spreader bar and a 7- to 12-inch squid, Joe Shute Lures Bluefin Series or Rapala X-Rap Magnum 30

CHUNKING: Same outfits as for trolling, but with 50- to 180-pound fluorocarbon leader, 6/0 to 9/0 circle hook

JIGGING: 6-foot heavy-action spinning outfits with 80-pound hollow-core braid and 80- to 100-pound fluorocarbon leader

LURES: 10-inch RonZ Big Game Series; 7- to 11-ounce flutter jigs; Shimano Orca or Strategic Angler topwater lures





**RAPALA X-RAP
MAGNUM 30**

Troll a diving lure behind a spreader-bar teaser.



SHIMANO ORCA

Cast topwaters when fish are hitting on the surface.



**JOE SHUTE
BLUEFIN SERIES**

Another effective option to pull 30 feet behind a spreader bar.



FLUTTER JIG

While drifting and chunking at night, drop a jig deep, to the thermocline. Vary the retrieve from normal speed to a simple dead-stick activated by the motion of the boat.

**REFINED
TASTE:** Yellowfin tuna demand a proper imitation of their accustomed forage.

THINNES' PRO TACKLE BOX

LIVE BAIT: 8-foot medium-heavy conventional rod and 20-pound-class, two-speed reel spooled with 50-pound braid, 40-pound top shot, 4 feet of 30- to 15-pound fluorocarbon leader, 2/0 Owner Gorilla hook

TROLLING: 30-pound rod and reel, 80-pound braid, 300 feet of 50-pound mono top shot, 4 feet of 80- to 100-pound leader



RAPALA X-RAP MAGNUM 30
Add a lipped plug to the trolling spread, on a flat line off one transom corner.

ZUKER TUNA FEATHER
Pull a tuna feather from one of the transom flat lines.

CEDAR PLUG
Drop a cedar plug back in the middle of the spread, in the clear water behind the wake.



Pro Tip # 2
"I look for a hard break in the water temperature – 64 to 72 degrees is perfect – and clear blue water."

LEFT COAST LESSONS

Capt. Jamie Thinnes of seasonssportfishing.com claims tuna fishing is good and getting better off San Diego. "We're seeing more fish — and bigger ones, too," he says.

Tuna season begins in early summer with the arrival of albacore, followed by yellowfins midsummer and bluefins as the season heats up, with early fall the hottest time of year. Thinnes starts the day with the satellite image of water temperature and chlorophyll count. Once he's in the zone, Thinnes trolls tuna feathers and cedar plugs while searching for diving terns and kelp paddies. He runs a cedar plug down the center in the clear water behind the boat wake. Tuna feathers take up the short riggers, and he runs a small jet-head lure on one flat line and a Rapala X-Rap Magnum 30 on the other. To crack open the bite from lockjaw tuna, he'll add a 12-bait spreader bar to the mix. When he finds floating

kelp, he sets out live baits on light tackle and drifts quietly past the paddy. "I start my first drift to pass 100 yards from the paddy," he says, "then make my next drift so I go a little closer." Not only does this keep him from spooking fish directly under the vegetation, it puts his baits in front of tuna that are hanging on the outskirts. Thinnes says live bait is the "it" factor for SoCal tuna, and he is careful how he transfers it. "Ask the guy at the bait receiver to only put two or three baits in the net at a time, and dip baits off the top of the tank when you're fishing." Thinnes laughs when he sees boats blasting through rough seas with a tank full of bait. "That beats up the baits," he explains. "You have to treat your bait like family."



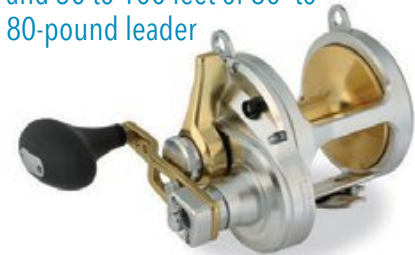
READY RIG:
Oil production platforms in the Gulf of Mexico draw bait and tuna.

JIG TIME:
West Coast tunas hit jigs dropped deep as well as surface lures, below left.

COMPACT POWER:
Smaller reels designed for braid pack plenty of power, below.

BEACH'S PRO TACKLE BOX

SMALL TUNA: 6½-foot medium-heavy, stand-up rod and 25-pound-class, two-speed reel spooled with 80-pound hollow-core braid and 50 to 100 feet of 60- to 80-pound leader



LARGE TUNA: 50-pound-class stand-up rod, matching two-speed reel, 130-pound hollow-core backing, 80-pound top shot, 130- to 170-pound wind-on fluoro leader, and 7/0 Mustad 39950BLN to 3/0 Mustad R10827NP-BN hooks



Pro Tip # 3

"People look at me like I have three heads when I tell them I'm using a 3/0 hook for 100-pound tuna, but they do the job. It makes a difference."

GULF OF TUNA

Tuna season never ends off Venice, Louisiana, so Capt. Kevin Beach (mgfishing.com) stays busy all year.

To find tuna, he first looks at the satellite temperature shot.

"I look for 68 degree water. That's their happy place," Beach says. When he stumbles across a grass line or trap float, he uses a sabiki rig to load up on mackerel and speedos. "I have a different style and size sabiki for different types of bait," Beach says. "I call it sabiki fruitcake."

When Beach hooks one tuna, he casts another

livey clear of the hooked fish and into the nearby school. "That's how we turn a single into a double or triple hookup," he says.

Tuna come in many sizes off Venice, and Beach believes hook choice is critical. "You can get away with a 7/0 Mustad 39950BLN circle hook on most baits," he says, "but in the summer, we use smaller mackerel and speedos for bait, so I switch to a Mustad R10827NP 3/0 hook with a ringed eye."



Pro Tip # 4

"If I get a single bite, I might drop the baits 500 feet back."

MID-ATLANTIC MAYHEM

On a good day, crews leaving Oregon Inlet, North Carolina, fill a two-fish-per-angler limit of yellowfins and return to the dock before lunch. "Then there's the 'other' days," says Capt. Dick Harris on Fintastic (fintasticsportfishing.com). When the tuna just won't cooperate, he takes his game to the next level.

Harris says running the humps and canyons where the edge of the Gulf Stream crosses the 100 fathom drop can be a good game plan. But if the fish aren't home, he searches along the 100 fathom edge, zigzagging offshore and inshore.

Once Harris finds fish, he pays close attention to his direction and speed when he gets a bite. "Many small boaters troll too slowly," he points out, suggesting a speed around 7 or even 8 knots. "If I get a single bite, I might drop the baits 500 feet back," he adds. "If they hit me all at once, I'll tighten up the spread."

Harris' yellowfin spread consists of eight to 10 skirted ballyhoo. To catch sharp-sighted tuna, Harris makes sure his baits are perfect. He switches out ballyhoo as soon as they lose scales or loosen on the hook. He also demands perfection in his skirts. "Make sure the hair isn't bunched up or too thick," he says. Harris insists that a skirt works best on its second or third day in the spread. "Maybe it absorbs the scent," he says, "but a fresh skirt won't get as many bites." If the fish still won't respond, he'll replace the rubber band with Monel wire and paint the hooks black or red. 🍷

HARRIS' PRO TACKLE BOX



CLASSIC: Sea Witch skirts rigged over a ballyhoo on a 9/0 hook offer a classic trolling presentation for mid-Atlantic tuna.

PLANNER

WHAT: Calico bass

WHERE: Kelp beds and boiler rocks of Southern California's coast and offshore islands.



WHEN: Year-round.

WHO: Boating anglers with reliable craft from 22 feet up. Those without a boat or looking for expert hands-on advice can contact one of these guides:

Always an Adventure

Capt. Barry Brightenburg
619-540-8944
alwaysanadventure
charters.com

Coastal Charters

Capt. Ben Florentino
310-779-0397
fishcoastalcharters.com

**Fishing with
Capt. Jimmy Decker**

Capt. Jimmy Decker
949-280-4597
fishingwithdecker.com





HOME TURF:
Boiler rocks
in shallow
water often hold
the biggest
calico bass.

KELP CRUSHERS

TOURNAMENT PROS DIVULGE
THEIR SECRETS FOR CATCHING
MONSTER CALICO BASS.

/// BY JIM HENDRICKS

With the morning sun peeking over the coastal mountains, a strong tide off the rocky shoreline of California's Palos Verdes peninsula bent the thick kelp forest sideways. Right after idling into position, Capt. Ben Florentino cast a light metal jig known locally as "surface iron." During the retrieve, the jig swam enticingly over the submerged amber fronds, but not for long. A big, aggressive calico bass rocketed from under the swaying canopy, inhaling the lure and bullying its way back down into the kelp.

CALIFORNIA CALICO BASS

PRO TACKLE BOX

RODS: 7½- to 9-foot medium to heavy action with lots of backbone.

REELS: Matching high-ratio bait-casters, such as Shimano Tranx or Okuma Komodo.

LINE: 65- to 80-pound-test braid with 4 feet of 50- or 60-pound fluoro leader.

LURES: 7½-inch Big Pancho Game Changer, rigged with a weedless weighted hook [1]; 5¾-inch Shimano Waxwing [2]; Kicker 45 or Tady 45 in brown or amber [3]; 9-inch Sledge Hammer with 1- to 1½-inch weedless leadhead; Jackall Ammonite Shad, rigged with a weighted weedless hook.



Florentino reared back and wound fast, winning the battle that ended with the release of the chunky checkerboard-sided bass, a genuine kelp crusher estimated at 8½ pounds.

The calico bass, also known as kelp bass, is one of the few species afforded game-fish status in the Golden State. Commercial fishing for calicos and its related species — barred sand bass and spotted sand bass — is prohibited. Over the past decade, the popularity of calico bass surged, thanks to tournaments sanctioned by the Saltwater Bass Series (SBS) and Salt Water Bass Association (SWBA) reminiscent of the freshwater bass tournament phenomenon.

It makes sense. Calicos, after all, share traits with largemouth and smallmouth bass, including an affinity for heavy cover. They even strike the same types of lures, allowing Southern California calico pros to use similar techniques.

Just like their freshwater counterparts, calico tournament anglers have advanced successful techniques for targeting the largest specimens, those fish that propel anglers high in the standings. Two top pros shared key secrets to fool calicos of over 6 pounds.

Creatures of the Kelp

Florentino, a former freshwater pro who now fishes salt water almost exclusively, finds lures most effective for big bass. “We don’t always catch a lot of fish with lures, like with live bait,” he says. “But the fish we catch are quality calicos.”

A 10-pounder is the Holy Grail of calico bass angling. Long Beach-based Florentino has two such trophies — a

10-pound, 2-ounce fish and another weighing 10 pounds, 4 ounces — plus four bass of more than 9 pounds on his record.

According to Florentino, moving water is essential when targeting big calicos. Strong current pushes the kelp below the surface and moves bait over the top of the canopy, and that’s when the big calicos come out to feed. But it’s critical to position the boat to make long casts parallel to the current and swim your lure over the kelp.

“It doesn’t really matter if the tide is flooding or ebbing, as long as there is current,” says Florentino.

His go-to lure, a 6½-inch Kicker 45 surface iron in amber with a bit of black near the rear, carries a heavy-duty treble hook. For tackle,

NO QUARTER:

Tighten down the drag to keep calicos out of the kelp or away from rocks.

IN THE WEEDS:

Kelp paddies demand tuned tactics, top right.

BENCHMARK OF SUCCESS:

Calico bass of over 6 pounds are considered trophies, below.

he favors a 9-foot Shimano Teramar 90H rod paired with a Tranx supersize bait-casting reel loaded with 80-pound braid and short trace of 50- to 60-pound fluorocarbon.

The long rod and the heft of the surface iron, almost 3½ ounces, allows him to rip off long casts over the kelp and cover lots of water. If he doesn’t get bit right away, he moves the boat along the edge of the kelp to work fresh territory. Another good lure for this technique is the Shimano Waxwing, which swims with a

tantalizing erratic side-to-side action.

Drags should be kept tight. Calico bass don’t jump, but they bolt for cover once hooked. “You can’t allow the fish to pull drag,” warns Florentino. “Otherwise, he’ll get locked up in the kelp, and you’ll have a tough time getting him out.”

Weedless Wonders

Tournament pro Matt Moyer and his partner, Nic Dragomire, from San Diego-based Team Ballast Point, have three SBS

CALICO BASS REGULATIONS:

The current minimum size limit for calico bass is 14 inches. The daily bag limit is five fish per licensed angler, but a growing catch-and-release ethic has many anglers releasing any fish of 5 pounds or more to maintain healthy populations.





tournament victories between them, and they owe much of their success to weedless lures, especially when the current isn't strong enough to submerge the kelp. "A weedless lure lets us cast right into the thick of it," Moyer explains. "We pull the lure over the floating kelp, and fish swim through open spots in between to grab it."

Big calicos often bust through the floating kelp to attack a lure. Other times, they pounce on it as it crosses an open patch of water.

Moyer likes a 7½- to 8-foot rod, with a light tip for casting swimbaits, but plenty of backbone to horse a big calico out of the kelp, which is decidedly more difficult when the fronds are on the surface.



RIG WEEDLESS

Calico pros increasingly turn to weedless paddle-tail swimbaits on special hooks, such as the Lazer Trokar Weighted Magnum Swimbait hook or Owner Weighted Beast TwistLock hook.

These hooks feature a corkscrew device that secures the head of the soft-plastic bait, with ⅛- to ⅜-ounce of lead molded around the shank. The hook point, inserted through the belly, nestles either in the molded groove in the back of the lure or inside the plastic, just under the skin.

Florentino fishes the Jackall Ammonite Shad rigged weedless with a 7/0 hook, while Moyer prefers the 7½-inch Big Pancho Game Changer swimbait in brown-amber on an Owner 10/0 Weighted Beast hook.

Jackall Ammonite Shad



He spools up an Okuma Komodo 364 bait-casting reel with 65-pound braid and a 60-pound fluoro leader. "We recommend buttoning down the drag because these fish like to get you in the rocks or the kelp quick," he says.

Flippin' Good

During slack tide, Florentino targets fish that, while not actively feeding, still strike out of instinct. "I like to flip swimbaits into holes in the kelp," he explains. "Then I let the lure fall straight down, parallel to the kelp stalks. A lot of times,

a big bass just can't help himself. He sees the bait fluttering down from the canopy and can't pass up the easy meal."

Florentino also flips lures next to isolated kelp stalks to reach single large calicos that hover near the base during slack tide. With this technique, the strike is subtle, sometimes barely a tap as the lure stops short of the bottom. This is your cue to put the reel in gear and set the hook.

Although he experiments with swimbaits for flipping, the Long Beach pro has

BOILER ROCKS:

Turbulent water around boiler rocks often harbors the biggest calico bass.

KELP COVER:

When the current pushes the kelp below the surface, work lures above the paddies. When the kelp is on the surface, go weedless.

CALICO BASS STRATEGIES

found that smaller 4-inch paddle-tail baits rigged with a 2-ounce leadhead often work best. He also uses a smaller bait-casting reel, such as the Shimano Curado 200 I, paired with a Shimano Teramar 711M rod.

Boiler Rock Recipe

Big calico bass love structure,

and many pros believe that so-called “boiler rock,” boulders close to shore, where waves sweep and break, are the best spots for big bass. “I like boiler rocks and reefs with a lot of surge,” says Moyer. “For some reason, bigger fish like to stay shallow.”

Florentino agrees, but

he prefers to target the rocky habitat in less than 20 feet of water early in the morning, before the sun lights up the shallows. Calico bass grow large by being cautious, and they are more easily fooled in low light. Casting and retrieving surface irons works well for fishing boiler rocks, but if there’s kelp in the area, Florentino opts for swimbaits such as a 9-inch Sledge Hammer with a 1- to 1½-ounce weedless leadhead. Bigger baits seem to attract bigger fish, especially in the turbulent surge around shore rocks. Florentino’s biggest calico came from a boiler rock in 5 feet of water.

The Place to Be

While you find calico bass anywhere you find kelp or rocks along Southern California’s coast or offshore islands, both Florentino and Moyer agree the top spot for trophies is Catalina Island.

“I fish all the islands off Southern California, but my favorite is Catalina,” says Florentino. “Thanks to a growing catch-and-release

ethic, the population of big bass at the island is strong and stable. “If you want a big calico off Southern California, I would go to Catalina,” Moyer advises. “There are giants there.”

Catalina Island has produced a number of double-digit calico bass in the past two years, and most of them are still there, thanks to catch-and-release efforts. Calicos don’t migrate far — all the more reason to remember a trophy with photos, not fillets. That way, the kelp crushers are sure to be around for years to come.

CALICO CALENDAR

MAY:	🐟🐟🐟🐟
JUNE:	🐟🐟🐟🐟
JULY:	🐟🐟🐟🐟
AUG:	🐟🐟🐟
SEPT:	🐟🐟🐟
OCT:	🐟🐟🐟
NOV:	🐟🐟🐟
DEC:	🐟🐟🐟
JAN:	🐟🐟🐟
FEB:	🐟🐟
MAR:	🐟🐟
APRIL:	🐟🐟🐟

CLOSE UP:

Calicos resemble freshwater bass, and they fall for similar artificial baits and tactics.



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SEAVEE 370Z///

**THIS NEW Z COMBINES
A SOPHISTICATED HULL
WITH WIDE-OPEN DECKS.**

/// BY JIM HENDRICKS



From the moment I stepped aboard the new SeaVee 370Z, I was struck by the massive amount of deck space, but I was soon equally impressed by the smooth-riding performance of the twin-stepped hull design, quality of construction and details of fit and finish.

True to the SeaVee reputation, the 37-foot center-console offshore fishing machine brings it all together, especially when powered by a trio of Mercury Verado 300s, as was our tester.

The aft cockpit offers nearly 78 square feet of deck space, resulting in plenty of room to fish. You'll also find an amazing amount of locker space below deck, including four for storage and two to access the bilge. The forward-most locker can be insulated for a fish box or plumbed as a livewell.

LENGTH: 37'	BEAM: 10'6"	DRAFT: 22" (w/ engines up)	FUEL: 480 gal.	WATER: 46 gal.	TRANSOM DEADRISE: 22.5 degrees
WEIGHT: 9,300 lb.	MAX HP: 1,200	BASE PRICE: \$256,900 w/ triple Mercury Verado 300s	SEAVEE BOATS: seaveeboats.com		

TEST CONDITIONS



WEATHER:
MOSTLY SUNNY,
SCATTERED CLOUDS

LOCATION:
DUCK KEY, FLORIDA

WIND: NNE,
15 TO 20 KNOTS

SEA STATE:
3 TO 4 FEET

TEST LOAD:
THREE ADULTS,
300 GALLONS OF FUEL



The 45-inch-wide helm station accommodates a pair of Simrad multifunction displays behind an acrylic door for extra protection.



The center console features nine flush-mounted rod holders on each side. The Key West-style hardtop allows for longer rods.



Twin 40-gallon pressurized livewells in the stern quarters and a 60-gallon livewell forward let anglers stock up on live bait.



The seating module houses a tackle prep station with fold-out table, storage trays and drawers, and a slide-out cooler below.



Below the forward deck is a monstrous main insulated fish box, and you can order an optional coffin box that tilts up on an electric lift to access the lockers under it.

All deck hatches on the 370Z have 1-inch gutters that drain overboard. Unobtrusive piano hinges, compression latches and gasket seals keep the lockers

watertight. Contoured racks under each gunwale hold coil hoses for saltwater and freshwater spigots.

There's no shortage of live-bait capacity. Standard 40-gallon pressurized livewells reside in the stern quarters, fed by a sea chest containing four Rule 2000 pumps, which also serve the forward 60-gallon livewell.

While the SeaVee 370Z is a serious fishing machine, creature comforts include a removable bench across the transom. A 170-quart Frigid Rigid cooler on tracks slides out from under the seating module, which does double duty as an aft-facing seat.

Tuck the cooler away, and the same area becomes a tackle prep station with a rigging table that folds out over a cabinet with trays

and drawers. Above, angled stowage hold five rods and four drink holders.

Forward of the center console, the seat slides to port for access to the cavernous console interior, where you find a counter-top, a sink and a freshwater faucet with pull-out shower head. A 12-volt fan in the console bulkhead helps keep the electronics cool and dry. Convenient tilt-out storage lockers for dock lines and life jackets reside within the forward inwales.

Each SeaVee is built to order, allowing every buyer to customize a boat to his particular needs, with features such as a transom door or a portside dive door.

SeaVee designed the voluminous anchor locker on the 370Z to secure the crossbars

of a fluke-style anchor with pipe below to receive the anchor shank and prevent it swinging. Just forward of the anchor locker, there's a second locker perfect to stow fenders.

The center console features nine gunwale-style rod holders on each side. The Key West-style hardtop accommodates longer rods, and cored-fiberglass construction allows it to serve as the base for an elevated second station.

The 45-inch-wide helm station with the wheel in the center provides plenty of space for the pair of Simrad multifunction displays stored behind an acrylic door for protection.

Two tiers of angled footrests allow you to brace yourself while perched on

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BOAT TEST

the helm seat or using it as a leaning post. This came in handy on test day, as seas off the Florida Keys were running 3 to 4 feet. Yet the Z-hull running surface took the chop in stride, even when pushing the mph into the high-50s, easily bridging the wave tops.

The solid feel of the boat as we challenged the seas is the result of a new cored-hull design that not only improves strength and durability, it also reduces weight to save on fuel and increase speed.

In our acceleration tests, there was very little bow rise, thanks to the hull's multiple lifting bodies. Our time to plane was a swift 3.6 seconds. And in our tests, the 370Z held on plane at speeds as low as 18 mph.

But once we mashed the throttles, the triple Merc 300s pushed the new SeaVee to a top speed of 60 mph at 6,000 rpm. We found the most economical cruising speed at 4,000 rpm and 37.3 mph, where the trio of 300s burned 38.8 gallons per hour for .97 mpg. That yields a cruising range of 465 miles based on the 480-gallon fuel tank.

The 370Z tracked smoothly and predictably, even when cornering

sharply while underway. Credit the design's speed rails that help ensure directional stability at any speed.

Ultimately, the SeaVee 370Z meets every criteria for a great boat, including abundant deck space, solid construction, top-notch fit and finish, and superb performance, even in nasty seas. About the only thing I didn't like about this new SeaVee is that it didn't belong to me. ☹



PERFORMANCE

LONG-RANGER:

The 370Z hull pushed by Mercury Verados offers substantial fuel economy and plenty of range to target fish in faraway waters.

RPM	MPH	GPH
3,000	17.5	25.8
4,000	37.3	38.8
4,500	45.4	51.0
5,000	50.2	67.8
6,000	60.0	87.6
w/ triple Mercury Verado 300s		

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BOSTON WHALER 420 OUTRAGE///

A WEALTH OF FEATURES TO FISH AND CRUISE IN MAXIMUM COMFORT.

/// BY ALEX SUESCUN



A brand earns customer confidence only after years of building top quality products that last and perform as well or better than advertised. And when it comes to longevity, quality and performance, Boston Whaler's pedigree remains irrefutable. This standard of excellence is evident everywhere in the new 420 Outrage.

Everything about the 420 is inviting, evidenced by two access doors located aft — one on the port side for boarding or boating large fish, the other on the transom, to starboard, to allow access for swimmers with the removable ladder. Next to catch my eye was the center console, with two rows of seating and air-conditioning vents serving both. The front row consists of three bolster-style seats with fold-down armrests. The center seat actuates

LENGTH: 42'6"	BEAM: 13'	DRAFT: 31"	FUEL: 600 gal.	WATER: 60 gal.	TRANSOM DEADRISE: 22 degrees
WEIGHT: 22,000 lb.	MAX HP: 1,675	PRICE: \$725,036 w/ quad Mercury Verado 300XL	BOSTON WHALER BOATS: bostonwhaler.com		



TEST CONDITIONS



WEATHER:
CLOUDY

LOCATION:
NAPLES, FLORIDA

WIND: NNE 8 MPH

SEA STATE:
2- TO 3-FOOT SWELLS

TEST LOAD:
TWO ADULTS,
400 GALLONS OF FUEL,
60 GALLONS OF WATER



Air-conditioner vents serve the helm and the second row of seats to keep skipper and crew comfortable in any weather.



A pair of retractable 50-foot washdown hoses make it easy to rinse off the deck, compartments or gear anywhere on the boat.



The leaning post contains storage, a livewell and a bait-rigging station that can be replaced with an optional summer kitchen.



An outstanding standard feature, a retractable awning extends the length of the cockpit, providing shade with the touch of a button.



electronically; the others rotate to face the rear. The second row, a leaning post that converts to a three-person bench, houses three tackle drawers, a 40-gallon pressurized aquarium-style livewell, and a bait-rigging station with sink that can be replaced with an optional summer kitchen with fridge and electric grill.

The helm boasts a center layout, with a dashboard

wide enough for three 15-inch multifunction displays, a panel of illuminated switches, stereo controls and Mercury SmartCraft Vessel View display, which networks with navigation electronics. Right of the steering wheel, Mercury DTS dual binnacle and Joystick Piloting control the outboards.

A hardtop holds a lockable electronics box. Ladders built into the frame keep walkways unobstructed while providing access to the optional flybridge and a second control station. An optional canopy deploys rearward, the length of the cockpit, for instant shade at the touch of a button.

Down below, an air-conditioned cabin hosts a double berth that converts

into a settee, a galley with sink, fridge, microwave oven and plenty of counter space, in addition to an enclosed head compartment.

A cooler and a storage compartment large enough for dive tanks, both with cushions on the lids, offer seating in front of the console. At the bow, twin outboard storage boxes double as bench seats that, along with an electrically raised table offered as an option, make an ideal spot to enjoy lunch or drinks.

Rod storage on the 420 Outrage is extensive: a total of 20 flush-mounted holders along the gunwales and transom, six vertical tubes on the hardtop frame, and under-gunwale lockers on both sides to safeguard eight more outfits. Fish boxes are

also impressive: six in-deck, insulated compartments provide 260 gallons of space to keep your catch chilled. The two largest are rigged to pump out, but they can also be refrigerated. A sizable lazarette in front of the transom allows comfortable access to pumps, fuel lines and electronic connections. A second, smaller livewell with clear lid rests on the port transom corner.

After going over a wealth of features and options too abundant to list in full, we took the Whaler out of Wiggins Pass to see how it performed in the open Gulf. With quad Mercury Verado 350s in back, the Outrage jumped on plane in eight seconds flat, remaining close to level in the process and never hindering visibility

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Dave Ferrell
Editor



Peter B. Wright
Editor-at-large

BOAT TEST

from the helm.

Rows of crab-trap buoys provided the perfect setting for a slalom test. I pushed the quads up to 5,000 rpm, then turned left and right to miss every float. Despite its wide 13-foot beam, the 420 responded promptly and smoothly to every maneuver, carving every turn without much loss of speed or excessive leaning or spray.

A trawler plowing a large wake offered the next hurdle. The Whaler easily jumped the wake with no pounding or rattling to speak of. At 4,200 rpm, ideal for cruising, the 42-footer moved along at 33 mph into the wind, a respectable speed for her magnitude, burning 49.2 gph.

Though the test boat was rigged with the optional

Verado 350s, Mercury performance tests with quad Verado 300s indicate the 420 Outrage does 38.1 mph and burns 65.6 gph at 5,000 rpm, and it hits 50 mph wide open burning just under 120 gph.

Finally, since offshore anglers spend time either kite-fishing, free-lining baits or jigging over bottom structure, I cut the motors to see how the Whaler would drift. With the outboards down, it remained broadside without the bow getting ahead of the

transom, which speeds up the drift and limits the number of lines the crew can fish effectively.

In the new 420 Outrage, the renowned boatbuilder has another winner. Along with its sporty looks and performance, the functionality, roominess, and the wide array of features and options make this Boston Whaler equally well-suited for extended fishing outings and island hopping with the family. 🌀



PERFORMANCE

HIGH-POWER OPTION:

A quad configuration of Mercury's new Verado 350s, an available power option, improves acceleration and top speed with minimal increase in fuel consumption.

RPM	MPH	GPH
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4,500	32.9	52.5
5,000	38.1	65.6
5,500	43.1	84.3
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SPECIES	1st CHOICE	2nd CHOICE	COMMENTS
	Hawaii	Panama	Pacific Blue Marlin: World-class action with Pacific blues returns to the waters off Kona, where numbers of the more common 300- to 500-pounders and sporadic larger females increase steadily as summer approaches. In Panama, the blue marlin fishing takes a step back, but enough fish remain to compete with black marlin for bridled small bonito and tuna.
	Dominican Republic	Turks and Caicos	Atlantic Blue Marlin: The bite keeps improving in the DR from Punta Cana to La Romana and well into Mona Passage. Big fish hunters do better off Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands later, but fly and light-tackle fans have a ball with smaller blues in the DR this month. Solid action also spreads from the northern Bahamas to the deep waters off Provo, Turks and Caicos.
	Panama	Australia	Black Marlin: Weather might be wet in Panama, but fishing for blacks close to shore remains outstanding, especially in the 70-mile stretch between the gulfs of Panama and Chiriqui, where fish show up just a couple of miles from land. Down Under, the Gold Coast jumps to the forefront, but the action off Port Stephens is still a promising option.
	Dominican Republic	North Carolina	White Marlin: May is usually the peak month for whites off the Dominican Republic, when many boats scale down their spreads and concentrate their efforts off the eastern point of the island. With baitfish supply and water temperatures on the rise, the Outer Banks again become the place to target whites in U.S. waters, and the bite should continue to improve.
	Florida	Mexico	Atlantic Sailfish: Spindlebeak seekers still bank on South Florida for excellent numbers of fish, particularly if strong spring breezes continue and bait schools keep moving along the coast. Down on the Riviera Maya, the action is dwindling as masses of sails leave the area, but enough fish stay through May to make the trip worthwhile.
	Guatemala	Costa Rica	Pacific Sailfish: Sailfishing off Guatemala's Iztapa and Puerto Quetzal goes down a notch if rainy season starts this month. Of course, the likelihood of hooking 15 sails a day or more is well worth dealing with some showers. In Costa Rica, rain isn't much of a problem off Flamingo and Tamarindo, in the country's most arid region, and the action can be superb.
	Mexico	Ecuador	Striped Marlin: Game boats and even some pangas along the Baja coast venture offshore armed with live <i>caballitos</i> or <i>sardinas</i> in search of stripes. This is a good month to find them finning on the surface. Off Ecuador, the fertile marlin grounds around the Galapagos stay hot, providing visiting anglers double-digit release days regularly.
	Bermuda	Mexico	Wahoo: Anglers targeting the striped torpedoes in Bermuda at Argus and Challenger banks see their catch rates spike. Live speedos are tops, but plenty of 'hoos fall for black-and-red and black-and-purple lures and trolling feathers. On Mexico's west coast, many of the same banks producing yellowfin tuna off Baja yield some nice wahoo as well.
	Hawaii	Mexico	Yellowfin Tuna: The deep blue waters surrounding the Hawaiian islands teem with ahi tuna (the local name for yellowfins) in May, a big draw for anglers and big marlin. The offshore tuna grounds off Cabo San Lucas, Puerto Vallarta and other Baja resort towns continue to tap into the great yellowfin fishery around the peninsula this time of year.
	Florida	Bahamas	Blackfin Tuna: The end of "The Bar" off Key West and the humps off Islamorada and Marathon are all prime spots to target blackfins this month. With calmer seas, the action around the shrimp boats in the Gulf is also top notch. There's no shortage of blackfins around Bermuda's offshore banks, either, and some of those often reach the 30-pound mark.

SPECIES	1st CHOICE	2nd CHOICE	COMMENTS
	Bahamas	Florida	Bonefish: There's no better time to target bones on the vast shallows of the islands nation. Expect large schools to be plentiful and trophy fish to roam the edges of the flats alone or in small packs. In Biscayne Bay and the Florida Keys, bonefish are active in May. Although the schools are smaller, most of the fish are bigger.
	Florida	Mexico	Snook: It's closed season again in Florida, but catch-and-release action in May can be spectacular. Look for plenty of fish, including some large females, around outside mangrove shorelines, as well as docks, bridges and beaches close to passes and inlets. Keep the fights short and use circle hooks when live-baiting to ensure healthy releases.
	Florida	Mexico	Tarpon: The big migration along both Florida coasts is in full swing. Anglers casting lures or flies find the best action in the Florida Keys backcountry and the Everglades. Fish moving along the Atlantic Coast are harder to fool, but they often eat well when the water is a bit cloudy. Live-baiters cash in along the Gulf beaches, from Boca Grande Pass south.
	Belize	Florida	Permit: Belize harbors one of the world's largest permit populations, and conditions this month should be ideal for sight-casting at cruisers and tailers on the flats, both inside and oceanside. In South Florida, many of the fish spawning on the wrecks return to the shallows in mid to late May. Expect the best action during spring tides.
	Louisiana	Florida	Red Drum: In Louisiana, anglers climb poling platforms and ladders secured with ratchet straps to spot reds in duck ponds and narrow bayous. But not all the fish are deep in the marshes; some of the largest patrol bays and brackish lakes closer to the Gulf. Florida Bay, Indian River, Mosquito Lagoon, Pine Island Sound and Charlotte Harbor are also good bets.
	New York	New Jersey	Striped Bass: Things start warming up in the Northeast, and stripers are following baitfish aggregations along New York and New Jersey's coasts. Finding bait pods is a great way to locate feeding bass, but it's not the only option. Some of the fish key on lady crabs inside Long Island Sound this time of year, providing excellent sight-fishing opportunities.
	Florida	Cayman Islands	Swordfish: The bite remains strong in South Florida, where dead bait and sewn belly strips fished with strobes or Cyalume sticks at night is increasingly giving way to daytime live-baiting. Swordfish catches are getting more consistent in the Caymans, especially off South Sound and The Shelf near Seven Mile Beach.
	North Carolina	Louisiana	King Mackerel: Some kings still linger in Florida waters, but most are migrating north along the Atlantic Coast and west in the Gulf. North Carolina's Outer Banks, where forage is abundant, is an ideal place to intercept them. In Louisiana, the oil rigs still produce, but bait pods lure kings to jetties and other structure in less than 30 feet of water.
	New York	New Jersey	Bluefish: Large schools of ravenous blues steadily work their way up the coast, and many reach New York and New Jersey waters this month. As with striped bass, finding bait pods is a surefire way to tangle with blues, which could run from 2 to over 10 pounds this early in the season. No matter their size, they won't turn down a spoon or popper.
	Florida	Bahamas	Dolphin: In Florida, southeasterly breezes create weed lines and push others closer to shore, increasing the flotsam that draws dolphin. In the Bahamas, the fish also find plenty of debris to hang around. Skirted ballyhoo, trolling feathers and small Kona-type lures catch them on both sides of the Gulf Stream, along with live baits and poppers.




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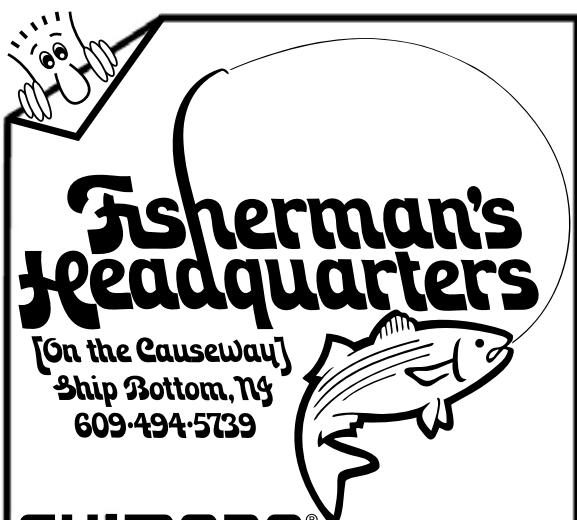
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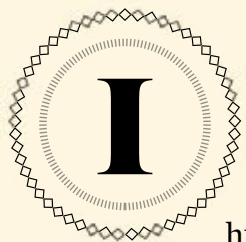
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ILLUSTRATION BY STEVE HAEFELE

IN A FOG

SOMETIMES THOSE WHO WANDER ARE LOST.

BY DOUG PIKE



It's happened to most of us who fish and hunt at some point. But when there are witnesses around, it's always embarrassing.

A guy with whom I fished occasionally years ago but haven't seen in a while, David something or other, one winter promised two mutual fishing buddies a great wading experience near Port O'Connor, Texas. That morning's forecast called for fog, the thick kind, but visibility wasn't so bad as the boat eased away from dock just before full dawn.

However, the farther they ran across the bay toward David's "secret" fishy flat, the denser the fog got. And by the time his GPS put them in the neighborhood, they couldn't have seen the house next door. David idled the boat cautiously forward, bouncing a spotlight low off the water in search of an old duck blind that had to be there somewhere.

And there it was. So there they were. The outboard was shifted into neutral, and David let the boat glide forward a little before easing his anchor gently into knee-deep water.

They would walk the hard-sand edge of this vast flat, straight down the shoreline, he instructed, casting off their right shoulders across mud-and-grass bottom where water



was a degree or so warmer.

There might be a few decent fish nearby, he noted, but he'd stopped well short of where the biggest trout were caught earlier that week.

"The good ones are farther up that way," David said, waving his rod tip toward the whiteness.

Pausing and tilting his head, he added, "Nobody's here. We'll probably have this spot to ourselves until the fog picks up."

And with that, they slipped into the water,

maintaining eye contact in what little sunlight penetrated the thickening fog as they shuffled away from the boat and deeper into the damp shroud.

Trusting that the soup would lift — eventually — they followed David down the shoreline. The only sounds they heard were those of lures spattering the bay's slick surface and the occasional trout trying to shake a hook.

"We're close," David promised after they'd walked and fished nearly

half an hour. "Ought to be in better trout soon."

And they were. One of the guys hooked a 4-pounder. David got one about the same size. And for the next little while, it seemed, they hooked and landed fish every dozen or so steps down the edge of the flat.

During a brief lull in the action, David lifted an index finger to his lips and uttered a quick "Ssshhhhhh!" "Hear that?" he asked. "That's the sound of a hull in the water. Somebody beat us here this morning. There were wet trailers in the lot. Remember?"

"Vaguely," said the others, but they hadn't heard anyone else all morning. Maybe it was a guy on his own. They shuffled on, still fishing, and now straining to locate that other fisherman.

David finally bellowed into the fog. "Anybody out there?" But he got no reply. So they kept fishing and kept moving, until one of the men said: "There! There's the guy's boat!" "Think he's OK?" Maybe he'd gotten lost in the fog.

Indeed, he had. After nearly an hour supposedly walking "straight down the shoreline" and away from the bow of his boat, David found himself staring right at its stern.

"Apparently," said the more sarcastic of David's fishing partners, "we've walked all the way around the world." 🍷

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